

VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

To Help Ensure a Merry Christmas

It is that time of year again! Where does the time go? Wasn't it just Christmas a couple of months ago? Really? Already?

So we'd like to take the time to talk about some Christmas safety concerns to help ensure that everyone has at least a safe Christmas.

That real, freshly cut Christmas tree, that's sitting in your favorite spot in the house, is the first item on my list of concerns. Make sure that you water your tree EVERY day! Why? Well, for the obvious reason first. It will retain a lot of water if you continue to water it every day, which will help the needles to stay on it longer. But, secondly, that added moisture will help to keep your tree from drying out through the Christ-

mas holiday, reducing the chances of it catching on fire from defective, over-heated tree lights.

Make sure that you do not place your tree near one of your heating ducts. Adding heated air near or under your Christmas tree will greatly increase the rate at which your tree will deplete its internal moisture. This will cause your needles to fall off faster and increase its flammability.

Now, let's talk about those Christmas lights that you have strung all over your tree and throughout your home. Keep in mind the current load that you are placing on your electrical outlets. Overloading those outlets will increase your chances of electrical outlet and fuse panel failures. We do not want any electrical

fires throughout this Holiday Season any more than you do!

Lastly, just a reminder that the number one cause of kitchen fires is leaving the kitchen and forgetting about those holiday dishes that are cooking on your stovetop and in your oven. Keep a close eye on your cooking devices so you can sit down with your family and loved ones for that great Christmas dinner that you have been getting ready for over the past few days.

Merry Christmas from your friends at the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District!

Winter Driving

By Robert Schattschneider

Winter driving can be a challenge, but the State of Oregon put together the "Oregon Winter Driving Guide," which you can find by using "Google" to view the complete guide. With winter weather just around the corner, it's time to be thinking ahead.

First, be prepared. Have the items in your car that can really make a difference if you are caught in bad winter weather on Oregon's roads and highways.

Here is a list of items that are suggested to have in or on your vehicles:

- A jack, lug wrench, and a shovel
- Chains or traction tires
- Flares
- A road map
- Extra warm clothes, boots, hats, gloves, blanket and or sleeping bag
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- First Aid Kit

- Matches or lighter
- Extra food and water
- Jumper cables
- Cell phone and adapter charger cords
- A pocket knife
- Extra washer fluid.

Tune up your vehicle by making sure that your antifreeze is good to -25 degrees. Make sure that your wiper blades are clean or new, and that your washer fluid level is full. Make sure that your heater and defroster is working properly to keep your vehicle and windshield warm and clear, and keep your gas tank on full.

Have someone check the condition and age of your vehicle's battery. Check your tires for proper tread and inflation. Also make sure that they are traction tires made for snow and include a set of snow chains for those roads and highways that are posted with signage requiring chains.

Oregon law requires traction tires or chains for all of Oregon's roads and highways. Some sections of our roads and highways are "Posted" with signage stating that they are required on those sections of the highway. Don't wait until you are stuck to chain up. Chain up early when you know that you are going to be traveling on those sections.

Some tips for winter driving can really help. First, do not use your cruise control on snow covered or icy roadways. Remember that bridges freeze first before the road surface.

Keep your hands at the 9 and 3 o'clock position on your steering wheel for best control of your vehicle.

If you lose traction, gradually slowdown without slamming on your brakes. Slamming on your brakes will only make your situation worse. Every action that you take while controlling your vehicle, do so smoothly and gradu-



ally. Sudden turns, acceleration, and braking will increase your odds of losing control on slippery surfaces.

In conclusion, watch out for snow plows and sanding trucks. Don't follow them too closely and do not pass. On some sections of our highways, snow plows sometimes work side by side to clear the roadways quicker and more efficiently. If you attempt to pass one of these vehicles, you might not realize that there is another plow or sanding truck in front of the other one.

You can find out more about Oregon's chain laws at: www.TripCheck.com

Time to Close the Door on Fast-Moving Home Fires

A simple behavior change could save lives

By Robert Schattschneider

As consumers we have come to demand speed. We order a book on Amazon and it's delivered to our front porch that afternoon. Order your dark roast on an app and it's waiting for you at the coffee shop. But speed is also killing people in their homes.

The pace in which a fire races through a home has increased at a deadly rate. Today, a person has about three minutes from the start of a fire to escape a house fire. That's a far cry from 40 years ago when you had about 17 minutes.

The materials used to build and furnish our homes have changed. Natural materials were used in the past, but now synthetics are more common and they burn faster. Add to that the open floor plans common in today's homes and it presents the perfect storm for a quick escalation of a fire. Research tells us that heat and speed of growth have both increased.

The results have been devastating.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that fire departments across the U.S. respond to an average of 357,000 residential fires annually. That has led to an average of 2,470 civilian deaths and 12,890 civilian injuries each year.

Lexi King survived a house fire, aided by a simple habit. Her family wasn't as lucky.

Lexi liked to sleep with her bedroom door closed. Her brother's door was always open. When an overnight fire destroyed their Texas house she was the only one to survive. Her brother and parents died in the fire.

"What I had was a closed door. I had oxygen. I had time to collect my thoughts. I had time to prepare myself," said King. "There literally is not a day that has gone by that I haven't thought of them and their beauty that they brought."

UL Firefighter Safety Research Institute (FSRI) found that rooms with closed doors during a fire had average temperatures of less than 100 degrees and 100 ppm of carbon monoxide, compared to 1,000+ degrees and over 10,000 ppm of carbon monoxide in the open-door rooms.

Each day fire departments across the nation respond to a variety of calls, some more easily controlled than others. Often, residents have escaped themselves prior to their arrival. Sometimes they haven't and residents are trapped. That's why we are leading a campaign across the community to change a simple behavior. In partnership with UL FSRI we are promoting "Close Before You Doze" to encourage every family to make sure they close all of their doors – bedrooms, bathrooms, basement – at night to

starve the fire of the oxygen it requires to grow and to give you more time to escape the fire.

There is a recipe to increase your chances of survival in a fast-moving house fire.

- Make sure your smoke and CO alarms are in working condition. Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. Install alarms on every level of the home. Smoke alarms should be interconnected. When one sounds, they all sound. Test them monthly.

- Close your doors at night.

- If a fire hits and you can get out of a burning structure, get out and close doors behind you as you exit. If you can't, put a closed door between you and the fire to

buy yourself valuable time. Don't ever go back inside a burning home.

- For parents worried about not hearing their children in the middle of the night with a door closed, simply place a baby monitor in your child's room. If you can't get to your children's room because you're cut off by smoke, the closed door will provide a safety barrier and you know your children have longer to survive in that situation.

- Have an escape plan, identify multiple escape routes from every room and practice them as a family at various hours.

After a fire starts, there's little time to act. Take these fire safety and prevention steps today and you'll sleep easier at night.

Calls responded to November 1-30

Fire	1
Emergency Medical Service	37
Hazardous Condition	2
Service Call	12
Good Intent	2
False Alarm	2
Total	56