

Residential fires cause 8,000 unnecessary deaths



by Robert W. Shirley

With the median cost of a new home now at \$63,000 and replacement costs of older homes also zooming to staggering levels, who can afford to be nonchalant about fire protection?

Even worse, residential fires kill about 8,000 people and injure 32,000 more annually. Nearly eight out of ten U.S. fire deaths happen at home and over half of them are in one- and two-family homes, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) -- all the more reason to make fire safety a household concern.

Well over half of the 800,000 home fires occur between midnight and 6:00 a.m. Cigarettes, cigars and pipes are still the major culprits, most often igniting in living rooms and bedrooms. While they may smoulder for several hours, it only takes two to four minutes after ignition for combustible materials to go up in roaring flames which release poisonous gases. Unfortunately, all this can happen undetected by a sleeping family.

Without a doubt, smoke detectors

can often mean the difference between life and death. Recent technology has produced a ready assortment of low-cost alarms.

The important consideration in selecting residential smoke detectors is approval by a certified laboratory to assure reliability.

Smoke detectors buy time to escape from fire, but planning for what each family member would do in the event of actual fire is still vital. Planning pays when minutes count.

The NFPA suggests that families make a sketch of their homes, indicating every possible exit: doors, windows, balconies, porches and garages. "Discuss which exits should be tried first and the alternatives. Make sure children recognize the alarm sound and can open windows and doors," Marion Cole, NFPA public affairs specialist counsels.

She has other pointers:

- Shut doors to barricade fire and smoke. If the door feels hot, head immediately to an alternative exit.

- Don't waste time getting dressed or trying to get to valuables.

- Crawling may aid escape. Smoke rises so the best air may be close to the floor.

- If clothing catches on fire, drop to the floor and roll quickly to smother flames.

- Establish an outside meeting place where everyone is to gather after escaping so you can see who's missing, but don't let anyone go back inside. Send someone to call the fire department at a neighbor's, reporting if you suspect someone is trapped in the burning home.

- Preparing for the worst, with effective smoke detection and good family planning, is likely to have the best payoff in protecting property and lives from fire.

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Most fatal residential fires start in living rooms, dens, family rooms or bedrooms of homes, according to statistics compiled by the National Fire Protection Association. Nearly eight out of ten U.S.

fire deaths happen at home and over half of them are in one and two family homes -- all the more reason to make fire safety a household concern.

Eight ways for securing home

Is securing your home something you should be seriously concerned about? If you consider the facts, you'll probably agree the answer is "yes." According to latest statistics, 2 million burglaries are committed in residences annually, with an estimated loss of \$1 billion.

Moreover, residential burglaries are on the rise. The incidence of burglaries in homes has risen 19 percent in the last five years. And, according to a recent national survey of crime in major cities, a homeowner's chance of being burglarized is 1 in 11.

But there are simple, inexpensive steps that can be taken to avoid becoming one of those statistics. Crime experts say that if protective measures can delay a burglar for just four minutes, he or she will give up and try another home.

1. STRONG DOORS WITH STRONG LOCKS. Doors are the first place a burglar will try. A secure door will force him to try another entrance. How do you know if your doors are secure? First, outside doors should be solid wood or metal so that they can't be kicked in. Hollow-core or paneled doors just aren't strong enough.

2. PROTECT WINDOWS FROM EASY ENTRY. A burglar will usually avoid breaking large windows because noise may attract attention. Sometimes, however, to keep the glass from shattering, he'll put tape on a window before breaking it with a blunt instrument. Then he'll reach inside to open the window lock.

Window locks that require keys to open are one way to stop a burglar. However, there is another way to secure double-hung windows and sliding doors: simply drill a downward slanting hole through both frames where the frames overlap and insert a

nail or pin. This keeps the burglar from opening the window from outside, and prevents him from lifting a sliding door out of its tracks.

Another method is to place a piece of dowel or an old broomstick in the sliding door's track. This will stop the burglar from opening the window from the outside; however, it won't stop him from lifting some doors or windows out of their tracks.

3. LIGHT THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME. Good lighting can keep a burglar from using trees or shrubs as a cover while working on a window. And it increases the chance your neighbor will see him and call the police.

4. AUTOMATIC TIMERS ON INDOOR LIGHTS. Most people leave one to two lights on when they leave for an evening to make it appear as if they're home. But a kitchen or bedroom light that stays on 24 hours a day, day after day, is a sure sign that you've gone away. Automatic timers on lights throughout the house can be programmed to simulate a more normal routine. Available at a nominal cost from most department or hardware stores, they're an excellent security investment.

5. STOP ALL DELIVERIES. Newspapers, mail and advertising circulars that pile up on a doorstep when you're away are a real giveaway to a burglar. Stop whatever deliveries you can while you're gone and ask a neighbor to stop by once a day to pick anything else up. If you'll be gone for more than a week, arrange to have someone mow the lawn or shovel your walk while you're away, too.

6. DON'T BE CARELESS ABOUT KEYS. Burglars know all the hiding places for spare house keys -- under rugs in mailboxes, on top of door

frames, in planters, and the like. Give your keys to a neighbor you trust.

7. IDENTIFY YOUR BELONGINGS. This precaution won't stop a burglar from getting into your home, but it will help you recover your possessions if they are stolen. Mark your belongings with an electric engraving pencil. (The Police Bureau can make these available on a loan basis.) Use your driver's license number as your identification.

8. CONSIDER THE BENEFITS OF A HOME SECURITY SYSTEM. Having a dependable alarm system installed is one of the most important steps you can take toward protecting your family and home from burglary. You'll want one offering a high level of protection, and will provide reliable service over the long run. Check the label and the company to make sure the system has been tested and rated by Underwriter's Laboratory, that it provides 24-hour monitoring and response and that it has a loud alarm that can be heard throughout your house even with the doors closed.

PCC offers consumer health class

Learn how to spend health care dollars wisely in a new course offered winter term at Portland Community College Sylvania Center, 12000 S.W. 49th Avenue.

Instructors Glayds David will show students how to intelligently evaluate advertising, labeling and health products such as over-the-counter drugs, sure-cures for chronic diseases, short-cuts to beauty and weight control, guidelines for selection of health services and other facets of consumer health.

"Some health products and services are not actually in the best interests of the consumer," David pointed out.

The three hour credit course is not only useful to the general consumer, but is applicable toward a major in health education, acts as an elective in any PCC associate degree program and transfers to other educational institutions.

David said the course involves decision making regarding advertising, quackery, how to spend appropriately for health care and health products. Lecture/discussion periods, demonstration/examination of fraudulent products or misleading advertising and guest speakers will all be used in the class format.

Preregistration is now underway for classes which start January 2. Consumer health will be held at noon Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the Health Technology building.

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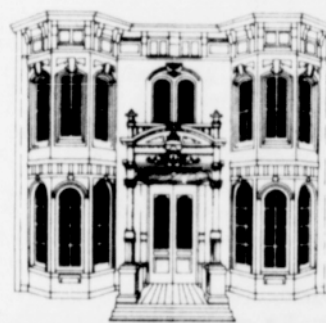
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The best time to call us, or any attorney, is before you are embroiled in a legal problem. This is called preventative law and it makes a lot of sense.

Regardless, when you call us we will arrange for an initial consultation at your convenience. Cost: \$20. We probably can't solve anything in this meeting, but it is a chance for you to explain your particular problem and for us to give you some idea of what it'll take to reach a solution. If you want us to proceed, we'll give you an estimate of the fees you should plan on. In writing.

