

Energy Awareness MONTH

HOUSING

The
Portland
Observer

Energy Efficiency Fuels Oregon Prosperity

No matter what fuel they're selling or what conservation programs they're offering, major energy suppliers and energy offices in the state have joined forces to promote energy efficiency in October, national Energy Awareness Month.

Oregon Department of Energy head John Savage cited the role of energy conservation in protecting natural resources and fueling economic prosperity.

"The first step toward an energy conservation ethic begins at home," said Savage. "The Oregon Department of Energy

organized the Energy Awareness Working Group to take that message to Oregonians."

Participating in the group with the state agency are Northwest Natural Gas, the Oregon Oil Heat Commission, Pacific Power, Portland General Electric and the city of Portland.

"I commend these corporations and organizations for working together to raise awareness in Oregon of the benefits of energy efficiency," said Savage. "In this time of intense competition in the energy marketplace, the group is proof that energy

efficiency is always good business and good for the consumer.

Among the groups accomplishments is a public service campaign promoting home energy efficiency on KGW-TV, a home energy supplement in the Oregonian, news coverage on home weatherization techniques, energy-savings appliances, home energy-saving tips on grocery bags, installation of weatherization measures for low-income Portland households and an energy fair at the new City Life development in Portland.

Savage also recognized each organization's achievements in energy efficiency.

Northwest National Gas provided free water and energy saving showerhead kits to more than 133,000 of its residential water heating customers.

The Oregon Oil Heat Commission provides a \$300 cash incentive for property owners to conserve fuel by purchasing a new high-efficiency oil furnace.

Pacific Power has saved 125 million kilowatt hours since 1990 by helping build-

ing owners and architects incorporate energy efficient technologies into commercial and industrial structures.

Portland General Electric has worked with property owners and contractors to build "Earth Smart" homes and commercial facilities that are resource-efficient and have healthy indoor air.

The City of Portland Energy Office sponsors a program to identify and complete energy savings projects at city facilities and is helping businesses save energy, water, waste and transportation costs. The city also

has weatherized 12,000 apartments and 1,780 low-income homes.

Savage pointed out the state's own achievements in improving energy efficiency.

"We estimate that our programs and activities save enough electricity to eliminate a power plant and enough natural gas, oil and other fuels to heat 250,000 homes a year," Savage said. "These savings cut energy costs for Oregon businesses, households and public agencies by nearly \$200 million a year."



Bob Hardies (from left), Audrey Sauders, Tom Markham, and Brent Warren enjoy the festivities Saturday during the grand opening of the Habitat For Humanity's Home Building Center. The non-profit group remodeled the former Shag's arena at Northeast 15th and Killingsworth to house its Portland headquarters. The effort was made possible with the help of several banks, foundations, building contractors and other volunteers. Habitat is an organization that builds homes with volunteer labor and donated materials which are sold with no profit and no interest to families who invest "sweat equity" into the construction. (Photo by Michael G. Halle)

House Of Horrors, A House Of Hazards

Carbon monoxide coming from the furnace; radon seeping in from the basement; formaldehyde oozing out of pressed wood furniture; dust mites crawling in your bed; asbestos, animal dander, mold, and pesticides. If it sounds like a bad movie just released in time for Halloween.

Beware! This house of horrors could be your own home! These are the ghostly entities that are lurking in many homes, haunting the halls, permeating the air in every room, in every house.

The Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) sponsored its second annual House of Horrors last Tuesday to demonstrate the ways a typical home can be haunted by the ghosts of indoor air pollutants. OSPIRG was joined by a panel of experts who work in the field of indoor air quality.

"We spend about 90 percent of our time indoors, and you will be surprised to learn that the air inside your home may be more polluted than the air outside in an industrial

city," said OSPIRG's Consumer Advocate Laura Culberson. "The specter of indoor air pollution quietly haunts us day and night, taking the forms of noxious fumes, invisible chemicals and deadly gases."

The main sources of indoor air pollution are radon, carbon monoxide and second-hand smoke. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that radon, an odorless, colorless and tasteless radioactive gas, causes 14,000 deaths per year. The risk of getting lung cancer exposure is second only to smoking.

Second hand smoke is most dangerous to children, whose lungs are still developing and who are more susceptible to lung and respiratory infections aggravated by tobacco smoke. Carbon monoxide claimed about 4,000 injuries in 1994, mainly due to improperly vented furnaces, stoves and space heaters.

"Lack of ventilation is what brings these demons to life," said Culberson. "It makes them deadly hazards instead of simply the air we

breathe."

As we prepare our homes for winter, we unwittingly seal in the deadly hazards in our attempts to seal our Jack Frost.

But simple steps can be taken to reduce the hazards.

They include checking your furnace and other combustion appliances annually for cracks, soot buildup and proper flame adjustment to decrease carbon monoxide.

Testing your home for radon can be done with a \$7 kit from the National Safety Council by calling 1-800-55-RADON.

Residents are encouraged to use non-toxic household items when possible and purchase only what you can use in a short period of time. Toxic items should be properly disposed of by calling Metro at 797-1650.

To get a free "How Healthy is the Air in your Home?" brochure, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to OSPIRG Air Brochure, 1536 S.E. 11th, Ave. Portland, OR 97214.

Fireplace Comfort With Safety

There are few things more likely to arouse warm, cozy feelings than the scent of a wood fire in October. That is, of course, as long as the smoke isn't filling your den.

Autumn is when even the most cerebral homeowners roll up their shirtsleeves and engage in the ancient art of building a fire in their living quarters.

Some quickly succeed, and, after seemingly little effort, repose in the glow of a crackling scarlet blaze. Others aren't so lucky.

Some exhaust every combustible material within reach just to get it going. Some succeed only to find that a family of nesting squirrels fled the chimney but left their home behind. Others get the bad news even sooner when they realize they forgot to open the damper.

People make fires in their homes for all sorts of reasons. Some even use them for heat. Here's how to keep your home fires burning - and why doing it right might even save you some money.

But first things first. "Clean your chimney!" said Walter William Carlson, the owner of W.W. Carlson Chimney Repair in Newtown, Conn. Believe it or not, there is actually stuff in your chimney that can burn. It's called creosote - the black, fluffy substance that accumulates on the

inside of a chimney or stovepipe. Creosote is what remains of what was supposed to go up in smoke. If enough accumulates, it can catch fire in all the wrong places and make life downright miserable.

Experts like Carlson recommend a professional chimney-cleaning each year before the first fire.

With the right equipment, of course, industrious homeowners can probably clean their chimneys themselves. (With the right equipment, they could probably clean their septic tanks, too. But who would want to?)

"Cleaning an ordinary chimney costs about \$75," Carlson said, adding that homeowners who insist on stretching their luck should at least look up (or down) the chimney to see if birds or squirrels have made nests inside over the summer.

At the very least, such an inspection will insure that the damper gets

opened.

Chip Brown, the owner of Pipe Dream Stove and Chimney Shop in Ashford, Conn., said that wood-burning stoves should be checked for leaks or cracks at joints and for worn gaskets on the door. Glass fireplace doors, Brown said, should also be checked for gaps and leaks where the frame meets the hearth.

And whether your combustion chamber of choice is a standard fireplace or a wood-burning stove, it is important to burn only "seasoned" wood. It lights easier, burns better and makes less nasty creosote.

"Wood used for burning should be cut, split and stacked for a year," said Scott A. Robinson, manager of Nordic Woodstove & Fireplace in Old Greenwich, Conn. "If it hisses when it's burning, that's a sign it's too wet." Robinson also said that wood stored outside should be protected from rain and snow. "But cover only the top and leave the sides open," he said. "People

cover the whole woodpile with those big blue tarps and they create a greenhouse effect in there."

Most experts agree that the best wood for burning is "anything that's hard." Maple and oak are good choices, they say, as are walnut, apple, cherry and even poplar. Avoid cedar - it burns easily with much noise and pretty flames, but it also creates lots of creosote and makes sparks that can fly across the room. Also, those fake logs are all right for fireplaces but should not be used in wood stoves - they need lots of air to burn properly.

Now, for the hard part - ignition. Just about anyone who has ever tried to build a fire in a fireplace has asked the question: "How do forest fires start when I can't even get a dried-out, six-year-old log to burn?" The trick, it seems, is to start small.

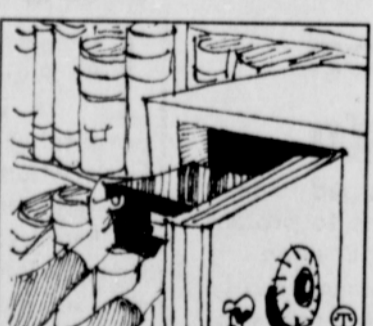
Robinson of Nordic Woodstove said that a layer of small, dry twigs on top of some crumpled-up newspaper should be topped with another layer of slightly larger pieces of wood and lit from the bottom. Once the fire starts, he said, larger pieces of wood can be added.

FIRE SAFETY QUIZ

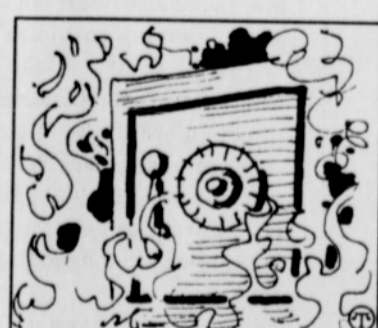
(NAPS)—Here's a short quiz to test your knowledge of how safe your records and valuables would be if a fire were to break out in your home.



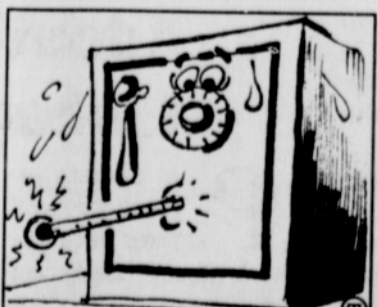
1. The average home fire raises the temperature to 400 degrees F. (a) True (b) False?



3. The documents most commonly stored at home are insurance policies (a) True (b) False?



2. An "insulated" metal box or file cabinet will keep important records safe from fire (a) True (b) False?



4. A UL-rated fire-safe security chest can protect contents at temperatures up to 1550 degrees Fahrenheit (a) True (b) False?

Answers

1. (b) False. The average home fire raises the temperature to 1200 degrees F., while paper starts to burn at 451 degrees Fahrenheit. 2. (b) False. If a fire occurred the papers inside would burn to cinders. While the metal boxes themselves may survive, they will act as incinerators for their contents. 3. (a) True. In a recent survey by the Sentry Group, manufacturers of fire safe storage home, followed by tax records, passports and contracts and deeds. 4. (a) True. Fire safe security chests from Sentry, for example, can protect their contents for half an hour at temperatures of up to 1550 degrees Fahrenheit. For a free brochure on Fire Safety Tips call Sentry at 1 (800) 828-1438.

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