

Mystery Fires

Serious Fire Danger Lurks In Common Household Articles

NEW YORK (P)—Fire that starts without a spark is getting close scrutiny from scientists. Both the national bureau of standards in Washington and the national board of fire underwriters in New York are studying the mysterious chemical processes involved in spontaneous combustion, which causes oily rags in your home to burst into flames.

This study is part of the effort being made to reduce the nation's fire losses. Within the past year fires have taken nearly 11,000 lives and caused an aggregate property loss of \$715,000,000, with supplementary losses running several times greater.

Few householders realize that there are a number of common substances which heat up by themselves and under certain conditions cause serious fires. Experts have found four general classes of such substances:

Hazards

1. Substances not themselves combustible, but which may cause ignition. Commonest in this class is unaltered lime. When it gets moist, it heats up.

2. Substances which catch fire below ordinary temperatures. These are chemicals like hydride of phosphorus. You don't have to worry about these—unless Junior has a chemistry set.

3. Substances which oxidize sufficiently at room temperatures to burst into flame. These include oils, such as linseed, soya, cottonseed, olive and others, when spread on rags or clothes. The oily mop you leave in your cellar can burst into fire. Some metals, such as iron, will smolder spontaneously when reduced to powder. Charcoal and soft coal will heat when left to themselves.

4. Hay and grain, which are in a class by themselves. There's still a lot of mystery about exactly how a pile of innocent-looking hay starts to get hot without any aid from man or woman. The commonest theory is that this is due to what the scientists call microbial thermogenesis—microbial heat in the hay gets busy after the hay is cut, and soaks up a lot of oxygen. This causes a chemical reaction—and chemical reactions always produce heat.

Sudden Tragedy

Because of the mass of hay, the heat can't escape. It builds up and speeds up more microbes to produce more heat. The next thing you know, Farmer Jones' barn is blazing.

All the experts can do about this so far is to warn the farmers to cure their hay before putting it in the barn. Moisture seems to speed up the microbial thermogenesis. Also, farmers are advised to take the temperature of their hay. If they stick a thermometer into the hay loft and find the temperature reaches 212 degrees it is time to call the fire department.

Householders, too, get a few tips



OILY COTTON ball is cut in half in bureau of standards revealing charred center.

from the fire experts. Throw away all oily rags, they urge. Don't store newspapers or combustible materials such as Christmas decorations in the attic. Warm weather can speed up chemical reactions.

If you must keep oily mops, hang them up where plenty of air can circulate around them. The air carries away the heat that might be generated. Or keep such mops in metal cans. The can keeps the heat-producing oxygen away from the oil.

Patterns Shown At Altamont

Miss Ada May Marshall was in Klamath Falls last Tuesday to present a Simplicity pattern style show at Altamont junior high school.

The outfits were modeled for 175 club members and leaders by members of Mrs. Dea Jean Wright's home economics classes. Girls participating in the show were Shirley Roberts, Deloris Wolfum, Sheryl Metler, Marlena Moore, Pat Fisher, Beverly Marks, Joyce Bildebach, Frances Hartman, Sharon Holston, Bonnie Sparks, Nancy Bliss, Mary Snider, Sharon Osborne, Karen Bruller, Nancy Pruett, Barbara Simmons, Shirley Anderson, Iris Carter, Lodema Sturben, and Genevieve Williams.

Mrs. Winnifred K. Gillen of the state 4-H club department, accompanied Miss Marshall. The special wardrobe is presented to give 4-H members, leaders and parents an idea of what is possible in selection of materials and patterns.

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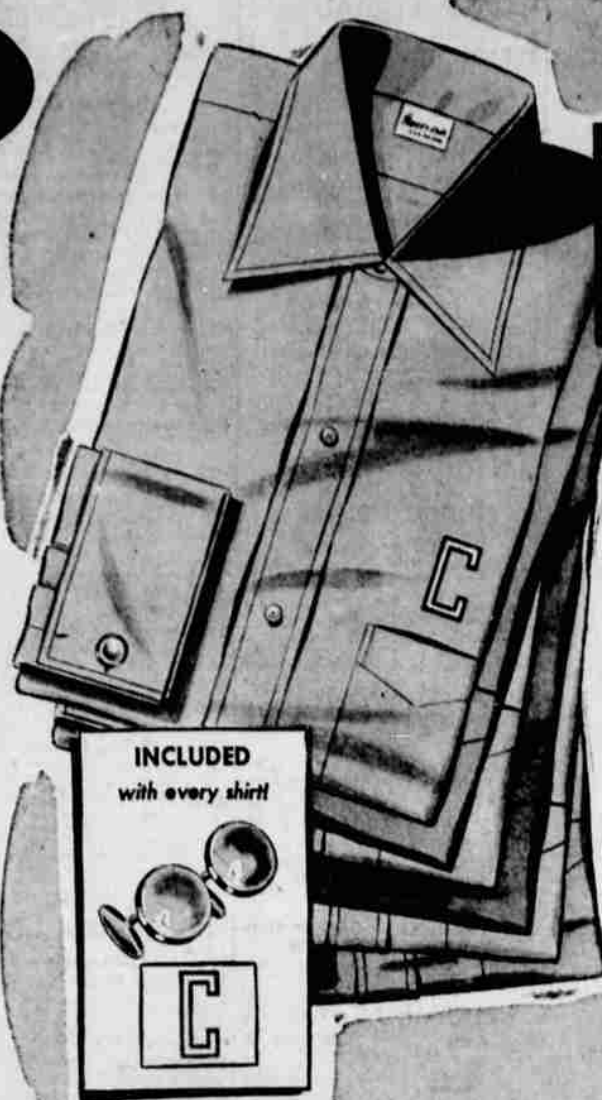


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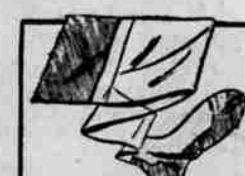
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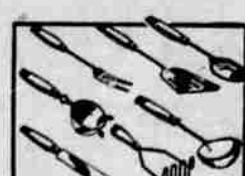
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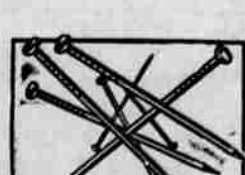
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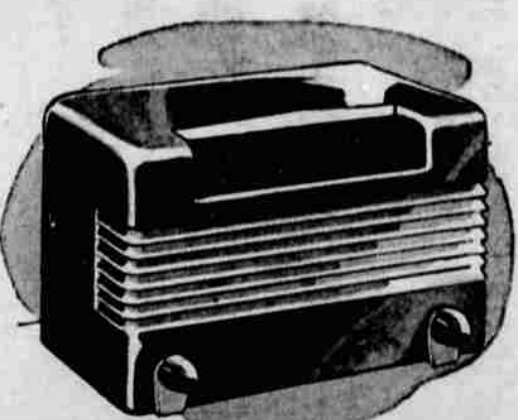


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