We Do It All!

By Tom Kiurski

Often, I will be asked questions that have to do with which fire apparatus respond on which type of calls. Others may ask what services we perform. I am also questioned about having firefighters at all of our stations every day. The short answer to these questions, and you may like it, is “We Do It All!” Your Livonia firefighters are also trained as paramedics, offering the highest level of prehospital emergency medical care. Whether we respond on fire engines or our “squads” (Transporting EMS vehicles), you have paramedics responding to your emergencies. We are also all firefighter certified, to respond to your emergency in a fast and efficient manner. The car crashes are handled by Livonia firefighters, as well. If you have a hazardous materials incident, we do that too. When the winds are blowing and the rain is pouring down, we are out with wires that may have fallen, to keep our community safe. We have five fully staffed fire stations, with firefighters on duty 24/7. As the Training Coordinator for Livonia Fire & Rescue, I am proud of the members we have and am confident that their training will give them the skill they need to respond to your emergency with commitment and compassion.
From The Chief

By Shadd Whitehead

While last winter was the mildest one we have had in quite a long time, we still have to prepare for the worst. Winters normally bring cold temperatures, which mean an increase in the use of furnaces, fireplaces and space heaters. Use the tips in this issue of “Couplings” and prepare for the cold weather ahead. Thanks for reading this issue and your continued support of your Livonia firefighters.

In case of an Emergency Dial 911

Can You See Me Now?

I sit in your front yard, or your neighbor’s front yard, waiting patiently until I am needed. Most of the time, I am no more than an obstacle to be mowed around, and you should never park in front of me. But, when I am needed, every second counts. Can you guess what I am?

A fire hydrant is the correct answer, and your Livonia firefighters need your help to keep them clear during the snowy winter months ahead. The fire hydrant will always be there when needed, but please make sure that if it is needed, it can be found!
All Treats and No Tricks This Halloween

By Tom Kiurski

Halloween can be the most frightful night of the year, as ghosts and goblin haunt the streets of Livonia. But with a little attention to safety, we can make the holiday filled with treats. Following are my top ten safety tips that are good to review before you send your costumed characters out for the night.

1. Unsafe Costumes Scare Me! Be sure the costumes you choose are made out of flame-resistant materials, which will be clearly marked on the packaging. This means that the costume will resist burning and can be extinguished quickly, so make sure we review the “Stop, Drop and Roll” if your clothes catch fire with your children.

2. Light It Up! Make sure costumes have plenty of bright colors so kids can be easily seen at night. If the costume is dark, add some reflective tape to the costume. Glow sticks can also be used to accessorize, and give the group a flashlight.

3. Keep Monsters Vertical! Make sure costumes don’t drag, which can trip up kids. Look at your front yard and eliminate all trip hazards, such as hoses, rakes and wet leaves.

4. Hungry Monsters Like to Feed! Send your children out after they have eaten dinner so they are more likely to resist eating treats before you get a chance to inspect them in the light of your home. Remind them the rule of no treats before inspection.

5. Don’t Decorate like Dr. Frankenstein! Purchase electrical lights and decorations that bear the label of an independent testing laboratory such as UL. Check the wires for cracks or fraying before plugging them in and placing them for decorations.

6. Candles can Combust! Any candles should be off the ground and out of the reach of children. Better yet, try the battery-operated flameless candles or other lighting options.

7. Keep Monsters in Packs! Make sure kids go out with a group of friends. If they are young, they must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

8. Informed Goblins are Smart Goblins! Go over safety rules with the group before they head out for the night. Only go to homes with lights on, stay together and look before crossing streets.

9. Keep Your Creatures Connected! If your kids are old enough to go out without adults, make sure there are cell phones in the group so they can call if there are any problems.

10. Vampire Roll Call! Have a set schedule so that kids will call or text parents to let them know their whereabouts. This keeps adults informed so we can have treats or drinks ready when they arrive at the home for a break or a late night snack.

There is my handy list of safety items that you should heed before Halloween. Take the few minutes to inspect your yard, decorations, costumes and inform your ghosts before they depart. Have a safe and happy Halloween!
CANDLE WITH CARE

Candles are a beautiful addition to your home’s decor. They add a warm glow to a room, and may also provide a pleasant aroma. However, candles also do have a “dark side”. Candles are responsible for many fires, especially around the winter season. If you use them, please use them safely.

Here are some safety tips regarding the use of candles:

- Never leave a burning candle unattended; have a responsible adult nearby
- Don’t place lit candles on, under, or next to, anything that is combustible
- Don’t place lit candles near windows where the curtains may blow into them
- Keep candles out of the main flow of traffic to avoid bumping
- Place candles in large, sturdy holders that won’t easily tip over

KEEP FIRE SAFE THIS THANKSGIVING

As with many U.S. holidays, fire incidents increases on Thanksgiving Day. This increase is troubling as it applies mostly to cooking fires in the family home. Thanksgiving Day fires in residential structures cause more property damage and claim more lives than residential structure fires on any other day, with cooking being the leading cause of these fires.

Start holiday cooking with a clean stove and oven, and keep a fire extinguisher nearby. Keep the kitchen off-limits to young children during food preparation to lessen the chance of kitchen mishaps. Wear tight-fitting sleeves so they won’t dangle near burners, and never leave cooking unattended.
No doubt, you are all familiar with the many advancements made by Benjamin Franklin. While the bifocals, the Franklin stove, his kite experiment while studying electricity and his political ambitions are well documented, he is famous for several other items as well. He published “Poor Richard’s Almanac”, where he coined the phrase “A penny saved is a penny earned”, among others. He also is credited with another famous saying “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”.

That quote was actually firefighting advice. Back in those days, any who suffered fire damage to their homes often took on irreversible economic loss. It was not long after that when he found the Philadelphia Contribution for Insurance Against Loss by Fire, among the first fire insurance writers in the New World.

Ben wrote a letter to his sister in Boston in 1778, which stated, in part:

I lament the loss your town has suffered this year by fire. I sometimes think men do not act like reasonable creatures when they build for themselves combustible dwellings, in which they are every day obliged to use fire. In my new buildings, I have taken a few precautions not generally used: to wit, none of the wooden work communicates with the wooden work of another room (he speaks of limiting fire spread by compartmentation and design), all the floors and even the steps of the stairs, are plastered close to the boarder, besides the plastering on the lathe under the joints (he is talking about sealing off cracks to not allow fire to spread to the rest of the house).

There are also trap doors to go out upon the roofs, that one may go out and wet the shingles in case of a neighboring fire. But indeed, I think the staircase should be made of stone, and the floors tiled as in Paris, and the roofs either tiled or slated.

While we don’t have the problem of fire spreading from one structure to the next as they did in Ben’s days when roofs were made of straw and thatch, his thought of noncombustible roofing materials were well ahead of his time.

Many of us do not build our own homes, and we have to rely on the codes that were in existence at the time helping to limit the fire spread that Franklin referred to. But we can control what is in our homes that may start fires.

Spend a few minutes with your family gathering unused items that you can eliminate to reduce the fire load in your home. Discuss and practice safe cooking practices with everyone who cooks. Point out your home smoke alarms and test them, so that you can help create the next generation of smoke alarm testers. Discuss and test your carbon monoxide detectors, and why they are an important part of your family safety plan.

By being fire safer in your homes, you can reduce your chances of an unwanted fire. And that can keep you from contacting your fire insurance company, compliments of Ben Franklin.
When we think of buildings and the amount of fire safety regulations that pertain to them, health care facilities top the list. The reasons are obvious: a building occupied by people who may be under anesthesia, recovering patients who may not be ambulatory, newborns and a host of other ailments that may complicate the orderly evacuation of a building under fire conditions. As usual, these regulations came about as a result of several disasters that taught us the lessons of health care facilities.

The granddaddy of these fires is the Cleveland Clinic fire that occurred on May 15 of 1929. At 11:30 am, an explosion in the basement rocked the four story hospital. The explosion was triggered by a fire that started when an exposed light bulb was close enough to x-ray film to cause a reaction. The force of the explosion and resulting fire charred stair rails, blew out steel floors, buckled skylights and the broken glass rained down throughout the building and onto the street.

Brave firefighters entered the structure to find the fumes overwhelming. A hole was cut in the roof of the structure to release some gases, while outside windows were broken out to aid in the evacuation of the deadly gases. Many heroic rescues were made, but the gas quickly took the lives of many of the victims.

The chemicals in the x-ray room burned, giving off a deadly bromine gas which filtered through the building. A second explosion rushed up from the basement and cut off all escape down stairways and elevators. When the gas came down the hall, people dropped where they were standing due to the suffocating fumes.

A total of 123 people died in the fire. Eighty were patients or visitors, while the rest were employees. After the fire, standards changed for x-ray chemicals, evacuation routes and storage of materials in health care facilities.
Fall Fire Safety Tips

Install Smoke Alarms; Test Monthly; and Replace Batteries Annually

- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and outside the bedrooms. Test your smoke alarms monthly. If they are battery operated, replace the batteries at least once a year or when they “chirp”. This chirping sound means the battery is low.

Make and Practice Your Home Escape Plan

- Make a home escape plan for the whole family before a fire ever starts. Practice your home escape plan with the whole family twice a year. If you know what to do ahead of time, you have a better chance of escaping from a fire.

Check Your Plan!

- Does everyone know two ways out of each room? The first way is probably a door and the second way out might be a window or another door.

- Do all windows and doors needed for escape open easily?

- Have you chosen a meeting place out front where everyone will meet? You want to be able to tell the fire department that everyone is out safely.

If a Fire Does Occur:

- Stay out; Don’t go back inside a burning building for anything or anyone. Let the fire department do that! They have the training and the protective equipment.

- Call the fire department from a neighbor’s house.

Keep Your Kitchen Fire Safe or Stand By Your Pan!

- Kitchen fire safety starts with the cook! Wear short or tight fitting sleeves when cooking. Never leave cooking unattended, but if you must leave the kitchen for a moment, turn the surface burners off. Stand by your pan! Keep small appliances unplugged when not in use and keep them clean and dry. If a small grease fire occurs, use the “Put A Lid On It” technique. Smother the flames by sliding a cover or larger pan over the fire and turn off the burner; never pour water on a grease fire or move the burning pan. If the fire does not go out instantly, leave the house and call the fire department. Cooking fires can quickly get out of control!
Sparky's Safety Spot

Space heaters need space!
Keep anything that can burn at least three feet/one metre away.

For a safe barbeque -- put your briquets in a fireproof bucket!

FIRE PREVENTION A TEAM EFFORT

Use Candles with care!
When you go out, blow out!

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