

Wrightsville Beach Fire Department News Release



From: Frank Smith, Fire Chief

Date: 10/2/07

Fire Prevention Week is October 7-13, 2007

Practice Your Escape Plan!

It's time for Fire Prevention Week, and from October 7-13 the Wrightsville Beach Fire Department is joining forces with the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to remind local residents to "Practice Your Escape Plan." During this year's fire safety campaign, firefighters will be spreading the word about the dangers of home fires and teaching local residents how to plan and practice home fire escape plans.

According to the latest NFPA research, 3,030 people died in 2005 in home fires – that's roughly eight people every day. Being alerted to a fire and knowing what to do to escape from one are extremely important, yet only 23% of households have planned and practiced a home fire escape plan.

Firefighters know first-hand that when it comes to home fires, seconds and minutes can mean the difference between life and death. As firefighters, we spend time planning and training to battle fires in our community because preparing ahead of time enables us to act quickly when faced with an emergency situation. Preparation is an important part of being able to deal with an emergency and it is crucial that residents take steps to prepare themselves for home fires by having an escape plan and practicing it.

When firefighters speak to residents who have experienced a fire in their home, the residents often recall becoming confused and disoriented by the conditions and severity of the situation – but they realized they needed to get out fast. Sometimes there are only seconds to escape, and having a plan in place that has been practiced saves precious time and makes survival more likely. We hope that Fire Prevention Week will prompt citizens in our community to plan and practice their escape.

Prepare Now to Survive a Fire!

- Install working smoke alarms on every level of your home. Place them inside each bedroom and outside of each sleeping area.
- Develop a fire escape plan that identifies two ways out of each room and a family meeting place outside of the home.

- Make sure your plan allows for any specific needs in your household. If everyone knows what to do, everyone can get out quickly.
- Practice your escape plan at least twice a year. You can do this in the spring & fall when you change your clocks & change your smoke alarm batteries.
- Studies have shown that some children and adults may not awaken to the sound of a smoke alarm; they may need help waking up.
- If the smoke alarm sounds, go to your closest exit. If you encounter smoke on your way out, turn and use your second exit. If you must exit through smoke, get low and crawl under the smoke to your exit. Don't take time to pick up belongings; just get out and help others get out. Move fast but stay calm.
- Once you are out, STAY OUT! If a family member is missing, immediately notify firefighters and tell them where the family member may be located. (location of bedroom, exit route, etc.). Firefighters are trained and equipped to rescue trapped occupants.

Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire, the tragic 1871 conflagration that killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres. The fire began on October 8, but continued into and did most of its damage on October 9, 1871.

In 1920, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first National Fire Prevention Day proclamation, and since 1922, Fire Prevention Week has been observed on the Sunday through Saturday period in which October 9 falls. Fire Prevention Week is actively supported by fire departments across the country. This is the 86th year that fire departments have observed Fire Prevention Week, making it the longest running public health and safety observance on record.

The Wrightsville Beach Fire Department will distribute a free smoke alarm and a free fire extinguisher to residents & property owners. A member of the fire department will deliver the equipment and explain the proper procedures for operating it. Quantities are limited, so equipment will be distributed one per residence on a first come, first serve basis. Firefighters are also available to conduct "Home Safety Surveys". Please call the Wrightsville Beach Fire Department at (910) 256-7920 or e-mail Chief Smith (fsmith@towb.org) to make an appointment.

For more fire safety information, please visit firepreventionweek.org