

# WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR FIRE PREVENTION WEEK?

October 3-9, 2010

Seems like a strange question to be asking but what are you doing to minimize the chances of a fire starting in your home or business? As we know a fire doesn't discriminate who, where or when it starts so long as the products required for a fire come into contact simultaneously: fuel, air and ignition source. Now this may or may not motivate you to actively do something to prevent the ingredients of a fire from coming together but are you willing to leave this to chance and risk the possibility of harm to yourself and to those around you? As fire chiefs we would like to help in making our communities safer by being proactive with the public and invited to help where needed to accomplish this goal. Anytime a fire fighter responds to a call it signals to us that fire prevention has failed and an uninvited fire is lurking in their home. No one likes uninvited guests so let's do our part to reduce the chances of fire invading our homes and communities. Let's start with what fire prevention week is all about.

Fire prevention week came about to commemorate the fires that devastated the City of Chicago and also the Peshtigo fire in Wisconsin. Both fires occurred on October 8 with most of the devastation being on the 9th in the year 1871. There were over 1400 deaths and thousands left homeless not to mention the thousands of acres and buildings that were destroyed in those fiery wakes.

On the 40th anniversary of these great fires the Fire Marshalls of North America proposed a way to remember and to never forget this tragic event which was endorsed by President Woodrow Wilson in 1920 with National Fire Prevention Day Proclamation. In 1922 Fire Prevention Week was established and to be observed on the week of October 9 of each year. It is the longest running public health campaign on record in North America and support by government, industries and the public throughout North American.

Each year a theme is picked by NFPA and this year's theme is: "Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With"

One very popular program that is used in Special Areas is the kids program: Fire Starts with you. It is for K-3 with activity booklets and a chance to win a home computer sponsored by ATCO Gas, ATCO Electric and Government of Alberta. This program highlights the things around the home we can do to reduce our chances of fire, such as recognizing fire and burn hazards, knowing what to do and who to call, having an home escape plan with two ways to exit a room, what to do when yours clothes catch fire and recognizing the sound of a smoke detector.

It is important as parents and adults to make sure you have an exit plan practice it with your families and check those smoke alarms once a month and replace the battery yearly or sooner if it begins to beep due to low voltage. A smoke detectors life span is 10 years maximum so check the date of manufacture on the back of the detector. When purchasing a detector there are different ones available such as the Photo electric, the Ionizing one, one for the hearing impaired and some that can have a pre-recorded message put in by the owner while others have hush features for nuisance alarms. Another recommendation for older homes, that have detectors not hardwired in, is to get ones with the ability to be wirelessly interconnected so that whatever room or floor the fire is at, it will sound all the detectors interconnected with the activating one. This may provide you with valuable seconds to safely escape unharmed. Whatever type you need, make sure it is CSA approved and follow manufactures directions for installation and testing. Be sure to install one in or near all bedrooms, at least one on all floors and attached garages. They are very affordable so no home or business should be without one.

In closing let me ask you again: What are you doing for fire prevention week? Practicing a home escape plan? Checking and minimizing all sources of fire and burn hazards? Checking smoke detectors?

Make plans this week to go over fire safety in your home and visit [www.3minutedrill.alberta.ca](http://www.3minutedrill.alberta.ca).

For more information contact your local fire department, Alberta Emergency Management Agency, or visit: [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).

Yours in fire prevention;

Glen Durand  
Fire Chief, Special Areas Protective Services.