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THE RURAL FIREFIGHTER

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Safe . . . or Lucky?

Dad decides the boy, now 18 with a couple years experience behind him, has driven the old Catalina station wagon long enough to allow him to take his pride and joy—a '69 Olds 442—out for the night with his buds. Following the curbside safety talk, Dad (somewhat reluctantly) turns over the keys. The boy promises he and his friends will be **safe**, and the car will come back in good shape. They take it easy at first, but once they're out of earshot, they spend the next several hours "cruising" at 90+ miles per hour, sliding corners, removing adequate tread from Dad's tires, the same things many of us did at that age (that wasn't just me, right?). The old man surely warned them about doing this and how dangerous it could be, but nothing like that could ever happen to them. And in the morning, the keys are returned. "Safe and sound, Dad."

If you've wandered 20 years into the past, come back to the present and read the last paragraph again. Nothing bad happened, law enforcement wasn't involved and the boys brought the car came home in one piece. They must just be inherently good at driving a 400 horsepower muscle car.

Yeah, I don't buy that either.

Now think of the number of times you've had close calls on the fireground. Felling a tree and it drops the wrong way. Melting a tail light. The wind shifts unexpectedly

and pushes the fire right at you. Any of this sound familiar? And how much time did you have to react before the event happened? We might laugh about it when it's done, but what minor, insignificant change in conditions might have made that incident much, much worse?

The little things are so important but so often we overlook them. I'm standing in a field of grass so why put a helmet on? The fire is only 10 acres, why look for escape routes and safety zones? Why even wear protective clothing at all? It takes so long to put it on and there's a fire to put out!



Those seemingly minor things done **every** time, **all** the time sets into our frame of mind that this is the way it's done. Regardless of what the fire throws at us, we're going to be as prepared as possible. When the "big one" happens—and it will happen—the

little things will be so ingrained in the way you do business, it will be as second nature as tying your shoes.

Luck reinforces bad habits. Every time we get away with something, we grow another layer of fireproof skin. And that won't help us a bit when the cow pie comes in contact with the rapidly spinning air movement device. So next time you engage a fire, ask yourself one question – "Is the reward worth the risk I'm about to accept?" If you can't answer yes, it's time to back off.

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June 2012

Wildfire Awareness Month

This year, Nebraska is again joining other western states in an effort aimed at creating greater awareness of wildfires.

Many of the 17 states west of the Mississippi participate. We hope each fire district/community will join us to increase the awareness of the dangers posed by wildfire and the steps for preventing them. The greatest risk is to the rural residents of our states: the farmers, ranchers and acreage owners.

This effort is promoted by Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Partners in Prevention and Nebraska State Fire Marshal's Office.

Wildfire Awareness Month is a great time for an open house, school visits, storefront displays, newspaper articles or time on the local radio station. If you have questions, please call:

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Smart Phone Training Resource

Ever wish you had a resource for short wildfire training topics? Look no further than the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (LLC) and the Six Minutes for Safety program.

Six Minutes for Safety was the first interagency safety initiative that, on a daily basis, addressed the high-risk situations that historically get firefighters in trouble. Each "lesson plan" is designed to be done in under 10 minutes. They can be done in a classroom, over a coffee break or on the tailgate of the truck.

Recently, the LLC also introduced the Six Minutes for Safety Calendar.

Daily topics are provided through a Google calendar account, allowing you to add the topics to your own Google calendar and view them from many smart phones.



Go to www.wildfirelessons.net for this and many more wildfire topics.



NFS at State Fire School Fire Chiefs Tool Box (class 12-3)

This class is designed for all fire department officers or anyone who has the potential of being the Incident Commander (IC). Topics presented will include: Fire Chief/Department liability, Situational awareness, Reading Smoke, Building construction, Tactics / Strategies. ** as we were developing this issue, the NSVFA office let us know that this class is already full!

Putting Fire on the Ground: Ignition Operations for Wildland & Prescribed Fire (class 12-6)

This course introduces the roles and responsibilities for firefighters, fire officers and landowners who plan to use fire as a tool. Common firing devices and general firing operations and techniques will be covered as well as statutory requirements and responsibilities, reading/writing burn plans and basic fire behavior.

Dependent on weather and location availability, field work on Sunday morning to include discussion and planning burns will take place. PPE will NOT be required.

Fire Prevention/365 (class 12-7)

Fire Prevention/365 will focus on the importance of Fire Prevention 365 days of the year. The class will explore techniques and ideas relating to fire prevention 365 days of the year with the importance of leadership and team work. This "Hands On" class will offer a chance to see and learn inventive ways to deliver effective prevention messages. Join in discussion of what fire problems are lurking throughout the state, who to approach and how to get fire prevention education beyond the doors of the fire station. Topics will include funding, leadership to team building, Smokey Bear, Sparky the Fire Dog and more in this energetic, dynamic and informational class.

The target audience is fire prevention/education personnel, community volunteers, teachers, Rural Board and City Council members, public education officers from fire departments, community groups and fire prevention co-op members.

New this year will be developing fire prevention programs with your computer as a tool, please bring a laptop to class on Saturday.



Nugget of the Day

Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.
– Dwight D. Eisenhower



Calendar of Events

- May 18-20 Nebraska State Fire School, Grand Island
- Oct. 1-4 Nebraska Fire & Arson Investigation Conf. Ramada Inn, Kearney
- Oct. 18-20 2012 NSVFA Annual Conference, Kearney

Fire Prevention Through the Ages

Since the beginning of time, fires have damaged wildlands, burned crops, destroyed homes and property, as well as taken many lives. During the same time, people sought to find ways to PREVENT fires, thus saving lives and protecting property.

For example:

25 A.D.: Firefighters of Rome patrolled the streets in their efforts to bring about proper fire prevention. They could administer corporal punishment to violators of fire codes and were provided with rods to administer punishment.

During this same time period, fire alarm systems employed by communities were unique compared with present practices. A patrol of 50 women roamed the streets during the night in the interest of fire prevention. Their duty, in addition to detection, was to awaken the sleeping community in the event of fires.

1722: An Englishman named David Hartley secured a patent for fire prevention. The invention consisted of steel plates with dry sand between them, used to reduce the spread of fire from one floor to another.

need and push fire prevention education and programming to the back burner and out of mind.

Well, I am here to tell you that YOU have the responsibility to your community and the people who live there. As a firefighter, do you believe in saving lives and protecting property? If you do, you cannot ignore fire prevention and public fire education. It is your job to deliver the message to the people. Become pro-active! Instead of brushing fire prevention aside, list the reasons you should be involved. For starters, try these:

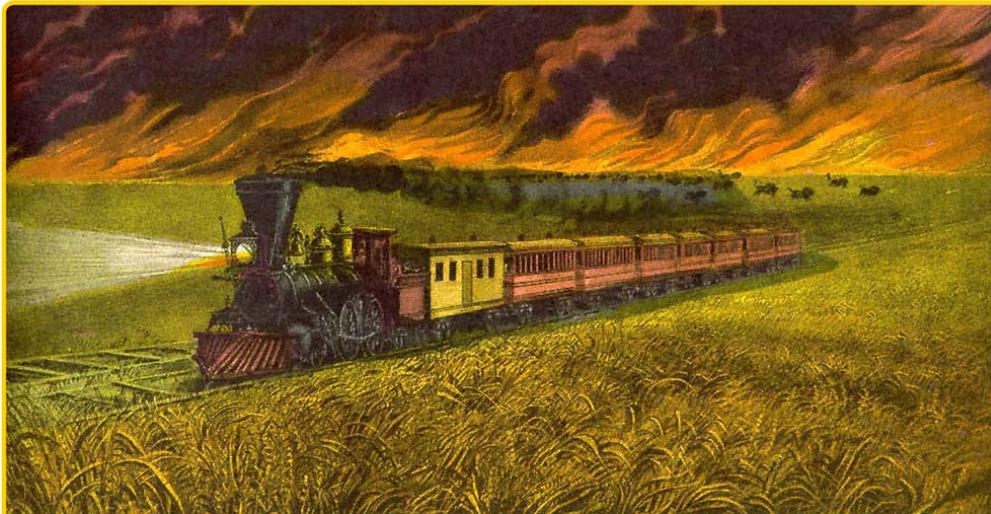
- Family
- Friends
- Relatives
- Neighbors
- Community
- Fellow firefighters

Think about the effect your involvement in fire prevention will have on others. You can reduce the number of fires and fire losses. When others are not doing anything, it does not mean you can just stand by, doing nothing. You KNOW better than that.

Are you getting the message now? Do you see the key to success in preventing fires in your community? That is right—YOU.

Remember, it is your family, friends, neighbors and community. You can make the difference. It is simple. St. Francis of Assisi said, "You start by doing what is necessary. Then you do what is possible. Before you know it, you are doing the impossible." Remember, the climb up the fire prevention mountain will never be successful until you take the first step.

Bob E. Vogltance
Prevention/Public Fire Education



PRAIRIE FIRES OF THE GREAT WEST.

1272: In Norwich, England 34 rioters involved in arson and looting were captured and punished. One woman was burned alive and the rest were dragged about town until they died.

1565: Bellmen patrolled the streets crying out, "Take care of fire and candle."

1585: In Edinburgh, a 15 year-old responsible for setting fire to peat bales was burned alive.

1643: England suggested candles be placed in water base holders.

1785: A Pennsylvania ordinance imposed a fine of 15 shillings for each chimney fire.

1807: An ordinance in Reading prohibited the smoking of cigars on the street after sunset. The fine was \$1.00 or 12 hours in jail.

One can see, all through history there has always been an effort to try to prevent the loss of life and destruction of property due to fire. One would think by now everyone would recognize the NEED for fire prevention in every community. Yet, many continue to ignore the

Sandy's Corner



Can it be that Fire School is only weeks away? Just think...it won't be long until you see me at the NFS booth in Grand Island. You'll see me "scanning" around to locate the department you are representing and quickly checking my "list" to see if I need to see you. Thanks to technology, I will have your department's history at my fingertips, and if you would like to see this history, I will be glad to show you.

Some of you dread seeing me – others don't. It depends on your updates and/or reporting status since last year. One way to prevent that "dread" is to make sure your Chief, RFD Secretary/Treasurer, and RFD President are current (just call me at 402.472.6623, email Sandra. lineberry@unl.edu or go online and check the officer's page). Your reporting status and Agreement/MOU's will also be reviewed to see if they are up-to-date.

We continue having departments switch from the yellow cards to online reporting. It is amazing how

much money is saved by having departments report online. Every time the cost of postage increases, I give thanks that we have this system. If you are a new officer and/or your department has not changed over, contact me. I'll be happy to walk you through the process, and once that is done, I think you will find it is much easier and less time consuming.

See you at Fire School.



Wildfire Training Email List

NFS has a new way to communicate with Nebraska firefighters—the Nebraska Wildfire Training Listserv. Anyone may sign up to receive (or announce) wildfire training. The list is moderated to stop spam and ensure only wildland/prescribed fire events are posted.

Signing up is easy. Email to: LISTSERV@UNL.EDU (note there is no 'e' on listserv)

Type in the message field (the subject line may be left blank): SUBSCRIBE wildfire-training

Do not include a signature block, as Listserv will try to interpret each line as a command. The system will

reply with information on sending messages, unsubscribing, etc.

We also plan to add a "fire-info" list at a later date. Please feel free to use it to announce your upcoming wildfire training events and let us know how it works for you!

THANKS!!!



Thanks to everyone who again made the Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy a success! To the firefighters who come to learn and the instructors who come to share their knowledge, we can't say thanks enough. It wouldn't be what it is without you. And always, thanks to Fort Robinson State Park, the U.S. Forest Service Pine Ridge Ranger District, the State Fire Marshal Training Division, Crawford Fire Department and many more. We're already looking forward to 2013!



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