Always try to ensure all the homes you visit have an adequate number of working smoke detectors!!!

Sound Off!

The prevention division is currently delivering a smoke detector educational program to local elementary schools in the county through the end of the school year. This gives younger students an opportunity to become familiar with the sounds and functions of smoke detectors, and where they should be located in their homes.

Part of this program offers the students families the option request an in-home evaluation of their current detectors, and free installation of new detectors if needed. Prepare for an increase in home visits and installs throughout the county.

If you need detectors or have any questions about the program, email Tyler Dean (tdean@albemarle.org) for further info.

Home Hazards

As firefighters, we are always at the ready in the event of an emergency. This reactionary measure is one of the most important aspects of being a firefighter, but taking the necessary steps to try and prevent these fires from occuring is just as important.

Follow the arrow and click on the picture and then take the time to educate yourself and your community about some of the common fire hazards found in the home and hopefully you can prevent a future disaster!

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Grilling Safety

With the warmer weather starting to stick around, more folks are going to head outside, dust off the old grill and get ready for a BBQ! When grills are not used safely, things can go horribly wrong. Every year, fire departments respond to hundreds of fires involving grills, hibachis, and barbecues. These fires cause injuries and property damage. For safe grilling, always follow your owner's manual and practice the safety tips provided here.

**Grilling safety tips**

- Always grill outdoors.
- Grills must be 10-feet from the side of a building unless the manufacturer's instructions say it can be closer. Make sure grills are not underneath overhanging branches.
- Grills cannot be used on a porch, balcony or deck with a roof, overhang or wall (other than the exterior of the building).
- Grills can only be used on open first floor porches, decks or patios if there is an outdoor stairway to the ground, or the porch is at ground level.
- Grills cannot be used on fire escapes.
- Place grills away from the house and deck railings.
- Keep all matches, lighters and lighter fluid away from children.
- Keep children and pets three feet away from grills. Children should never play near grills or propane cylinders.

**Handling Propane**

- Keep all propane outdoors, at least 10 feet away from building openings such as doors, windows and dryer vents, and 20 feet away from air intake vents and ignition sources.
- Do not smoke while handling a propane cylinder.
- Store propane cylinders upright in an outdoor, shaded area; do not leave cylinders in a vehicle; cylinders should not be used, stored, or transported where they can be exposed to high temperatures.

**Charcoal grill safety**

- Use only charcoal starter fluid. Gasoline and kerosene should not be used to start a fire in a grill. Never add lighter fluid to burning briquettes or hot coals. Doing so may cause a flash fire and result in serious burn injuries.
- Charcoal briquettes give off carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless gas that can be deadly. Always use charcoal grills in a well-ventilated area. Never use charcoal grills indoors.
- For proper disposal of grill ashes, allow the coals to burn out completely and then cool for 48 hours before disposal.
- If you must dispose of ashes before they are completely cooled, thoroughly soak them in water before putting them in a metal container.

**FACTS**

- July is the peak month for grill fires.
- Roughly half of the injuries involving grills are thermal burns.
Mental Health

Firefighters, EMTs, and other emergency responders routinely face situations that can impact their behavioral health. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and now is a great opportunity to evaluate your own risk factors, as well as implement training and awareness in your department so all personnel know that help is available should they need it.

Firefighters and emergency personnel are at risk for many behavioral health issues including PTSD, stress, anxiety, addiction, suicidal thoughts, depression, burnout, and more.

A key step in preventing tragic outcomes is for personnel to be able to talk openly about behavioral health issues. Work to create a culture in your department where behavioral health is recognized as being just as important as physical health and safety. Talk to each other on why behavioral health is important, what risk factors you may face, how to recognize signs and symptoms, and what to do if you or a fellow firefighter or EMT needs help.

"Peer Support Group"

The Peer Support Group was formed to offer support to those in need of a shoulder to lean on if you have experienced a traumatic event, or if you are struggling with other personal or professional concerns. Peer supporters are trained to listen and refer to other resources when the needs exceed the peers skill set or abilities. This team was trained by Albemarle’s Emergency Services Psychologist Dr. Greenberg and certified by the VA Peer Support Association. The group is designed for people to “talk out” problems, concerns or issues with a fellow firefighter.

Peer Supporters have agreed to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In the event that you need someone to talk to, please do not hesitate to contact us. You can email at ACFRGroupPEERSupport@albemarle.org. You can also contact us via personal cell phones. In the event that you cannot get in touch with anyone, you may contact the BC phone and they will be sure to contact someone who is willing to assist.

Drowning Prevention Tips

Drowning is the second leading cause of injury death among children. Many drownings occur swiftly, silently, and without notice.

At Home

☐ Infants and young children can drown in as little as 2 inches of water.
☐ Never leave a baby, toddler, or special needs child alone in the bathroom.
☐ Keep all buckets empty and out of reach of children.
☐ Babysitters should not be expected to bathe babies or young children.

In Yard

☐ Keep buckets and garbage cans covered.
☐ Empty the wading pool when its use is not supervised.
☐ Have a self-closing, self-locking barrier, at least six feet high, surrounding pool and spa areas.
☐ Chairs or tables should never be left near a pool or spa fence because they can be used for climbing.
☐ Provide a barrier and/or alarm between a house and pool.

In and Near Water

☐ Inflatable water toys should not be used as life jackets; they are not reliable.
☐ No matter how capable, children of all ages need supervision around the water.
☐ Insist that life jackets be worn in or near the water, including on docks, or in boats or inner tubes.
☐ At social gatherings, take turns being “designated adults” to supervise children near the water. Teach children not to swim or play around water without adult supervision.
☐ Swim classes do not replace adult supervision.
☐ Teach your child to wait for permission before getting into the water.
☐ Assist lifeguards in supervising your child at the pool.
☐ Enforce and model all water safety rules.
☐ Insist on the BUDDY SYSTEM in or near the water.
☐ Water must be at least 10-12 feet deep for safe jumping and diving.
☐ Never allow alcohol use around water.
☐ Keep away from suction drain covers in spas, hot tubs, and pools.
☐ Nothing replaces constant supervision.
Home Escape Planning

Your ability to get out of your home during a fire depends on advance warning from smoke alarms and advance planning. Fire can spread rapidly through your home, leaving you as little as one or two minutes to escape safely once the smoke alarm sounds. A closed door may slow the spread of smoke, heat and fire. Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. Pull together everyone in your household and make a plan. Walk through your home and inspect all possible exits and escape routes. Households with children should consider drawing a floor plan of your home, marking two ways out of each room, including windows and doors.

Click on Sparky to download an escape grid!

Buckle those seatbelts!!!

One of the safest choices drivers or passengers can make is to buckle up. In 2015, seat belt use in passenger vehicles saved an estimated 13,941 lives. Many Americans understand the lifesaving value of the seat belt — the national use rate is at 88.5 percent — but nearly 27.5 million still don't buckle up.

Seat belts are the best defense against drunk drivers and they prevent nearly half of all fatal injuries. So please, for yourself and your family, take the time to buckle up every time.

NHTSA reports that 7,460 drivers ages 15 to 20 were involved in fatal crashes in 2005. In those fatal crashes, 3,467 of the young drivers were killed, 2,171 passengers in the vehicles with the young drivers were killed, and 2,555 others were killed.

Regular seat belt use is the single most effective way to protect people and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes. In 2005, 77 percent of passenger vehicle occupants in a serious crash who were buckled up, survived the crash. When worn correctly, seat belts have proven to reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and by 60 percent in pickup trucks, SUVs and mini-vans.

Remember- It is everyone's responsibility to educate, learn, adapt and overcome. Keep up the hard work and be safe out there!

Tyler Dean
Public Educator
Albemarle County Fire Rescue