

# Fire chief offers tips to prevent residential blazes

David Yonke, Editor 12:54 p.m. EDT October 7, 2016



(Photo: Craig Shoup/The News-Messenger)

FREMONT - Don't leave dinner cooking on the stove, be sure to blow out the candles and clean the lint from the dryer. Those simple steps will reduce the risk of the three leading causes of house fires, Fremont Fire Chief David Foos said.

As national [Fire Prevent Week](http://www.nfpa.org/public-education/campaigns/fire-prevention-week) (<http://www.nfpa.org/public-education/campaigns/fire-prevention-week>) kicks off Sunday, Foos and other fire officials are making an effort to educate the public about cutting the risk of residential fires.

He spoke this week to the Fremont Rotary Club and was interviewed by The News-Messenger about the department's programs to prevent fires and, at the same time, keep his firefighters safe.

"Every year, we're talking to 1,100 kids in elementary schools, so if it helps one family or one individual, then the effort is worth it," Foos said. "It's one of those jobs where we'll never be able to provide good hard statistics on the effects of the program, but we know it is making a difference."

The Fremont Fire Department conducts more than 1,000 safety inspections a year and responds to an average of 550 emergency calls annually, Foos said, with 55 percent of those calls for medical assistance.

When it comes to residential fires, unattended cooking is the most common cause. Nationally, an average of 162,000 house fires start in the kitchen and result in 430 deaths.

Candle fires are the second-leading cause of house fires, and washers and dryers are third on the list. Foos advised not only cleaning the lint from the dryer's trap, but also checking for lint buildup in the unit's flexible metal exhaust vents.

Other common causes of residential fires are kerosene heaters, generators and careless smoking, the chief said.

"People should make sure to leave proper clearance around supplemental heaters," he said.

Don't overload electrical circuits or use too many extension cords, he added.

Smoke detectors are important safety devices, but they only save lives if they are in proper working order.

Foos said to make sure the batteries are working and also to check the date on the smoke detector itself. The devices have a 10-year lifespan, he pointed out, and after that they need to be discarded and replaced.

"The theme of this year's Fire Prevention Week is 'Don't Wait, Check the Date,'" Foos said. "Look on the back side of the smoke alarm. If it is 10 years old, it's time to replace it."

The Fremont Fire Department distributes smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors free of cost to the public, and are available to anyone who requests one, Foos said.

"We do over 100 smoke detectors every year. We install them if people need help with that. We also have a limited number of carbon monoxide detectors which we will distribute, and we also will install them if needed. It's all made possible due to generous donations from a lot of businesses here in town," Foos said.

Fire Prevention Week was established in 1911 to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire of Oct. 8 and 9, 1871, which killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 people homeless and destroyed more than 17,400 structures.

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