**Frontline**

Westerville Division of Fire Newsletter

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**What to know about outdoor fire safety**

Outdoor fireplaces are popular features in backyards, particularly this time of year. In order to ensure safe operation and reduce risk of danger, please be aware of these safety tips and regulations.

In the City of Westerville, open burning without a permit is prohibited. Open burning is defined as the burning of any materials where contaminants are emitted directly into the air without passing through a stack or chimney from an enclosed chamber.

The Ohio Fire Code is the minimum standard for fire safety in the state, and establishes regulations for open burning. All burning practices must also be in accordance with the City's Codified Ordinances and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency regulations.

Ohio Fire Code requires an outdoor fireplace be constantly attended until the fire is extinguished. A fire extinguisher, garden hose, water barrel, dirt or sand must be nearby and available to put out the fire quickly if needed.

Westerville does permit outdoor fires contained to an outdoor fireplace. Also, chimineas and portable fireplaces enclosed with a screen and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions are usually acceptable. The burning of materials in metal cans, barrels, containers, wire baskets or any homemade device is considered open burning and prohibited. Building a fire directly on the ground is also prohibited.

Only clean, dry firewood should be used as fuel. Yard waste or grass clippings should not be burned. It is illegal to burn garbage or material containing rubber, petroleum or plastic anywhere in the state at anytime.

The fire cannot create an offensive/objectionable condition for your neighbor(s). In this case, the Fire Division will request that the fire be extinguished. We may also determine if wind conditions pose a hazard, requiring the fire to be put out.

- Don’t start a fire when it’s windy. The wind can carry sparks and set fire to property. If the wind will carry the smoke into your neighbor's home or yard, don't use the fireplace.
- Limit the size of the fire. The flames should not be higher than the components of the fireplace.
- Use a screened cover.
- Never leave a fire burning unattended, even if it is screened. Embers can still escape and start a fire.
- Never set any fireplace on a wooden or composite deck.
- A fireplace should be replaced once it begins to show signs of heavy rust.
- Locate your fireplace away from buildings, fences, overhanging tree limbs and overhead electrical wires.

When starting a controlled fire, safety is the top priority. If you have questions about the safe operation of an outdoor fireplace, please call the Westerville Fire Prevention Bureau at (614) 901-6600 or visit www.westerville.org/fire.

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**An unusual schedule**

Firefighters love to talk about being firefighters. From our interactions with citizens, many still have an image of firefighters sitting around or relaxing in a recliner. Many people may not realize exactly what we do, and it doesn’t help that many television shows perpetuate that idea. The reality is that your fire department is a complex public service agency with an ever-evolving and increasing workload.

Today's firefighters are expected to accomplish multiple daily assignments while maintaining proficiency in a variety of disciplines. However, it is what we do at night that often brings questions: Do we sleep on duty? How much sleep do we get in a typical night? First, it’s important to know that firefighters work 24-hour shifts (a “platoon” schedule of 24 hours on-/48 hours off-duty) While on duty, crews are required to respond to emergency calls at any hour. We sleep in the evening hours after working an eight to 10-hour shift responding to emergencies, training, conducting inspections and other daily duties. It’s actually unusual for any firefighter to get a full night’s sleep while on duty.

Significant research has been conducted on firefighter sleep habits in order to determine the best, safest work schedule. The 48-hour off-duty schedule was established to return firefighters’ sleep rhythms to normal, based on the assumption that they do not get a full nights rest while at work. Because we respond to an average of five calls each night, this routine allows us to respond to emergencies and make split-second decisions, no matter the time of day or night.

We look forward to more conversations with the public we support. Look for us each month at 4th Friday in the bank lot across from City Hall.
Announcements

The Sunrise Rotary of Westerville recently named Firefighter Rick Best the recipient of the 2013 Service Above Self Award. The Service Above Self Award recognizes a non-Rotarian who has distinguished him or herself in community service. Rick was presented with the award at the Rotary meeting last February.

Rick has been a member of the Fire Division since 2006 and is assigned to Station 112. In addition to his duties at the Fire Division, Rick is also the Advocate Assistant Manager for the Everyone Goes Home program through the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. This program works to prevent firefighter line-of-duty deaths and injuries. Rick oversees about 150 managers and advocates at the regional, state and local levels. He is also a primary trainer for the program and delivers safety and leadership instruction to fire departments across the country. Rick is also an instructor at the Ohio Fire Academy and the State Fire School at Bowling Green State University.

We are proud of the work Rick continues to perform as a firefighter and advocate for firefighter safety. He represents our community with distinction and is truly deserving of this award.

Disaster Drill Helps Westerville Fire Train

On Thursday, April 4, the Westerville Division of Fire participated in a countywide disaster drill coordinated by the Franklin County Emergency Management Agency. The drill simulated several scenarios as training exercises for public safety agencies involved in a disaster response. The fire safety training component centered on a Level III HazMat scenario, staged at Central College Elementary.

The incident involved chlorine gas leaking from a pickup truck. Westerville Fire and the Northwest Area Strike Team (NAS-T) worked to contain the leak and on decontamination procedures. EMS personnel exercised transporting multiple patients to local hospitals. Volunteers acted as victims exposed to the dangerous fumes. As an added component of the exercise, City officials opened an Emergency Operations Center and practiced the emergency notification system.

“This program has been months in the making from a training perspective, but in reality we have only seconds to react and begin our emergency procedures,” said Fire Chief Bernie Ingles. “This active training sharpens our skills in responding if a crisis like this were to happen in our community.”