

Press Release – Peterborough Fire/Rescue

September 6, 2005

For Immediate Release: Candles can lift our spirits, yet they can easily result in disaster

All too often, fatal fires caused by candles make headlines. In Massachusetts not long ago, two children died after a candle ignited a plastic bathtub. During Hurricane Floyd, two Maryland boys died after a child dropped a lit candle on his bed. In Pennsylvania, unlawful tenants using a candle started a fire that killed four people.

In 2001, home candle fires killed 190 people and caused more than a quarter million dollars in property damage in the U.S., according to the latest data from the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). That data also show that candles started more reported home fires in 2001 than at any point since 1980, the first year of available data.

Tragedies like these happen every day, and Peterborough is no exception. Each year, Peterborough Fire & Rescue responds to calls involving unsafe use of candles. There is much that you can do to protect yourself and your loved ones. As your local safety experts, Peterborough Fire & Rescue wants you to recognize this danger and learn the ways you can prevent a candle fire in your home.

Used safely, candles can fill our homes with fragrance and create a calming and welcome mood. They add glow to the holidays and are an important part of religious observances. But what you may not realize is how easily a fire can start when a candle is left unattended or left burning while someone sleeps. That is why this year's fire prevention week theme is candle safety.

Like a lit cigarette or a pan on a stove, a burning candle without human supervision is a disaster waiting to happen.

Why are we seeing so many candle fires? Well for one thing, the popularity of candles is soaring. Americans are buying \$2 billion worth of candles every year, and you can now find candles in 7 out of 10 households across the country. A typical manufacturer offers between 1,000 and 2,000 specific varieties of candles.

The most important thing to remember is that you can make sure candles are used safely in your home. If you use candles in your home, follow this safety advice:

- Place candles on stable furniture, in sturdy holders that will catch dripping wax.
- Never leave a candle unattended.
- If the power goes out, use flashlights for illumination, not candles.
- Keep candles away from all things that can catch fire.
- Place candles on higher furniture, where they won't be knocked over by children or pets.
- Never place lit candles in windows, where they could ignite blinds or curtains.
- Don't allow children or teens to have candles in their bedrooms.

- Ask questions about the candles and candle-holders you buy. There are new standards that major suppliers will follow, to make sure the candles and candle-holders won't break, tip over, or otherwise malfunction in ordinary use.

Extinguish candles carefully, using a long-handled candle snuffer or a soft, directed breath. Be careful not to splatter wax when extinguishing.

PFR is joining forces with NFPA during Fire Prevention Week – “Use Candles With Care - When you go out, blow out!” – to raise awareness of important causes of home fires and the steps people can take to avoid them. Candle safety is one of our top fire safety priorities here in Peterborough, during Fire Prevention Week and all year long.

To kick off Fire Prevention Week, Peterborough Fire & Rescue will be sending personnel to area schools and childcare facilities to educate children about fire safety. This has become a tradition that Peterborough kids have looked forward to every fall for decades. During school visits, children will be able to meet members of PFR, see firefighting equipment, and maybe even sit on a fire truck. School visits will take place during the week of September 26-30, the week before National Fire Prevention Week begins.

According to Chief Lenox, PFR has altered the date of its Open House at the fire station. Traditionally, Open House has been held on the second Saturday of October. This year, in order to coincide with the “Peak Into Peterborough” festivities, the PFR Open House will be held on Saturday October 1.

If you use candles in your home, please “candle with care.” If you have any questions about Fire Prevention Week or our upcoming open house, please stop by the station, give us a call, or log on to our website at www.firerescue.us.

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