

## Routt County Office of Emergency Management



# Emergency Preparedness & Response News

October 2014



It's Fire Prevention Week — help us sound the alarm that working smoke alarms save lives.

Did you know that many people don't test their smoke alarms as often as they should? When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast. You need working smoke alarms to give you time to get out. Test yours every month!

### Home fires

- In 2011, U.S. fire departments responded to 370,000 home structure fires. These fires caused 13,910 civilian injuries, 2,520 civilian deaths, \$6.9 billion in direct damage.
- On average, seven people died in U.S. home fires per day from 2007 to 2011.
- Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries, followed by heating equipment.
- Smoking is a leading cause of civilian home fire deaths.

### Smoke alarms

- Almost three of five (60%) of reported home fire deaths in 2007 to 2011 resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.
- Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home fires in half.
- In fires considered large enough to activate the smoke alarm, hardwired alarms operated 93% of the time, while battery powered alarms operated only 79% of the time.

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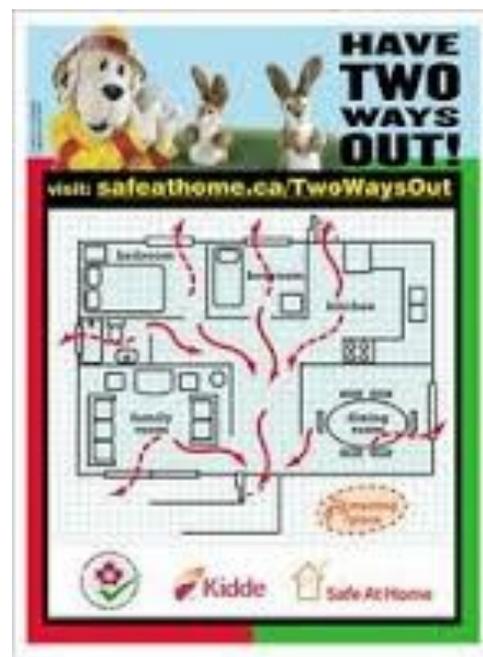
- When smoke alarms fail to operate, it is usually because batteries are missing, disconnected, or dead.
- An ionization smoke alarm is generally more responsive to flaming fires and a photoelectric smoke alarm is generally more responsive to smoldering fires. For the best protection, or where extra time is needed, to awaken or assist others, both types of alarms, or combination ionization and photoelectric alarms are recommended.

## Escape Planning

- According to an NFPA survey, only one-third of Americans have both developed and practiced a home fire escape plan.
- Almost three-quarters of Americans do have an escape plan; however, more than half never practiced it.
- One-third (32%) of respondents who made an estimate thought they would have at least 6 minutes before a fire in their home would become life threatening. The time available is often less. Only 8% said their first thought on hearing a smoke alarm would be to get out!

**The reality is that when fire strikes, your home could be engulfed in smoke and flames in just a few minutes.**

It is important to have a home fire escape plan that prepares your family to think fast and get out quickly when the smoke alarm sounds. What if your first escape route is blocked by smoke or flames? That's why having two ways out is such a key part of your plan.



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## About Fire Prevention Week...

### Commemorating a conflagration

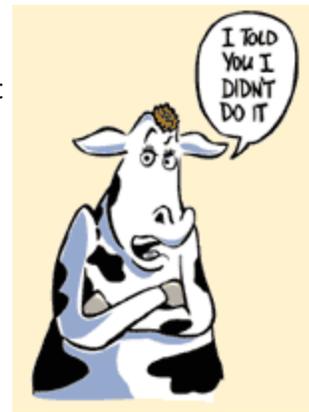
Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire, the tragic 1871 conflagration that killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres. The fire began on October 8, but continued into and did most of its damage on October 9, 1871.

According to popular legend, the fire broke out after a cow - belonging to Mrs. Catherine O'Leary - kicked over a lamp, setting first the barn, then the whole city on fire. Chances are you've heard some version of this story yourself; people have been blaming the Great Chicago Fire on the cow and Mrs. O'Leary, for more than 130 years. But recent research by Chicago historian Robert Cromie has helped to debunk this version of events.

### The 'Moo' myth

Like any good story, the 'case of the cow' has some truth to it. The great fire almost certainly started near the barn where Mrs. O'Leary kept her five milking cows. But there is no proof that O'Leary was in the barn when the fire broke out - or that a jumpy cow sparked the blaze. Mrs. O'Leary herself swore that she'd been in bed early that night, and that the cows were also tucked in for the evening.

But if a cow wasn't to blame for the huge fire, what was? Over the years, journalists and historians have offered plenty of theories. Some blamed the blaze on a couple of neighborhood boys who were near the barn sneaking cigarettes. Others believed that a neighbor of the O'Leary's may have started the fire. Some people have speculated that a fiery meteorite may have fallen to earth on October 8, starting several fires that day - in Michigan and Wisconsin, as well as in Chicago.



### The biggest blaze that week

While the Great Chicago Fire was the best-known blaze to start during this fiery two-day stretch, it wasn't the biggest. That distinction goes to the Peshtigo Fire, the most devastating forest fire in American history. The fire, which also occurred on October 8th, 1871, and roared through Northeast Wisconsin, burning down 16 towns, killing 1,152 people, and scorching 1.2 million acres before it ended.

Historical accounts of the fire say that the blaze began when several railroad workers clearing land for tracks unintentionally started a brush fire. Before long, the fast-moving flames were whipping through the area 'like a tornado,' some survivors said. It was the small town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin that suffered the worst damage. Within an hour, the entire town had been destroyed.

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## **Eight decades of fire prevention**

Those who survived the Chicago and Peshtigo fires never forgot what they'd been through; both blazes produced countless tales of bravery and heroism. But the fires also changed the way that firefighters and public officials thought about fire safety. On the 40th anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire, the Fire Marshals Association of North America (today known as the [International Fire Marshals Association](#)), decided that the anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire should henceforth be observed not with festivities, but in a way that would keep the public informed about the importance of fire prevention. The commemoration grew incrementally official over the years.

In 1920, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first National Fire Prevention Day proclamation, and since 1922, Fire Prevention Week has been observed on the Sunday through Saturday period in which October 9 falls. According to the National Archives and Records Administration's Library Information Center, Fire Prevention Week is the longest running public health and safety observance on record. The President of the United States has signed a proclamation proclaiming a national observance during that week every year since 1925.



THE BURNING OF CHICAGO.

This work of art is in the public domain in the United States and is therefore free for reuse. It is a reproduction of a painting by J.M.W. Turner, titled 'The Burning of Chicago', which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1857. The painting is a reproduction of a painting by J.M.W. Turner, titled 'The Burning of Chicago', which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1857.

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## Presidential Proclamation — Fire Prevention Week, 2014

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
A PROCLAMATION

Fires can take lives, devastate communities, and destroy our homes and businesses. They pose a threat to Americans across our Nation, and they cost us billions of dollars each year. As we mark Fire Prevention Week, we emphasize the importance of taking steps to prevent fires, and we recognize the selflessness of those who answer the call to fight these blazes, placing themselves in danger to help others.

All Americans can protect themselves by taking precautions to guard against fires. This week's theme, "Smoke Alarms Save Lives: Test Yours Every Month," reminds us of the importance of installing and maintaining smoke alarms in the places we live and work. Powerful and unpredictable, fire spreads rapidly and widely. That is why I encourage every American to develop and practice fire evacuation plans that will allow for swift exits from regularly visited places. It is our responsibility to teach our children about fire prevention and do everything we can to protect our loved ones during these emergencies. To learn more about fire safety, visit [www.Ready.gov](http://www.Ready.gov).

This year, our Nation has suffered tragic losses as wildfires ravage States across our country. As wildfires increase in frequency and intensity in a changing climate, fire prevention and planning only become more urgent. My Administration continues to take action to increase our Nation's preparedness and resiliency, and every person can do his or her part. Americans who live near woodlands should clear flammable vegetation away from homes and buildings, and everyone can be ready by making an emergency kit and discussing evacuation routes and emergency plans with their families.

We owe a great debt to our brave first responders and firefighters who run toward the scene of a disaster to fight fires. They are heroes who demonstrate courage, determination, and professionalism every day as they battle flames and smoke and teach their neighbors how to protect themselves. During Fire Prevention Week, we recognize our duty to be vigilant and take action to avert fires, and we remember the sacrifices of those who gave their lives so others might live.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States do hereby proclaim October 5 through October 11, 2014, as Fire Prevention Week. On Sunday, October 12, 2014, in accordance with Public Law 107-51, the flag of the United States will be flown at half-staff at all Federal office buildings in honor of the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service. I call on all Americans to participate in this observance with appropriate programs and activities and by renewing their efforts to prevent fires and their tragic consequences.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand fourteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-ninth.

BARACK OBAMA