

2021 FIRE PREVENTION WEEK
OCT 03-09, 2021

Terry Reilly
187 Fire & Emergency Services (FES)
Assistant Chief - Fire Prevention

The goal of **fire prevention** is to educate the public, take precautions, and to prevent potentially harmful fires by facilitating early intervention, and ensure safety of exposed personnel. It is a proactive method of reducing emergencies and the damages caused by them.

Fire protection is the study and practice of mitigating the unwanted effects of potentially destructive fires. In the event of fire emergencies, firefighters, fire investigators, and other fire prevention personnel are called in to mitigate, investigate and learn from the damage of a fire.

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.

President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed the first National Fire Prevention Week on October 04, 1925, beginning a tradition of the President of the United States signing a proclamation recognizing the occasion. In the commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire, which began October 8, 1871, and did most of its damage on October 9. The President of the United States has signed the proclamation proclaiming a national observance during this week every year since 1925. This horrific fire killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres.

Another fire was The Peshtigo Fire in Peshtigo, Washington; it was the most devastating forest fire in American history, but because of the attention of the Great Chicago Fire it drew little notice outside of the region. This fire also occurred on October 8th 1871, and roared through Northeast Wisconsin, burning down 16 towns, scorching 1.2 million acres, and killing 1,152 people, and scorching 1.2 million acres before it ended.

Historical accounts of the The Peshtigo 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 say. It was the small town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin, that suffered the worst damage; within an hour, the entire town had been destroyed.

This year's National Fire Protection Association theme is; "Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety." Knowing the different sounds that your smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detector's makes when they are activated. A continuous chirping every 30-60 seconds usually means the batteries need to be replaced and or the entire unit itself needs to be replaced. This notifies occupants on how they should respond. If we remember from last year, home cooking was the leading cause of reported home fires and injuries from 2014-2018. During this same time period 2014-2018, home fire deaths was the second leading cause. This helps reinforce why everyone needs to have and know their emergency plan at home and at work.

Do you remember themes in years past? "*Not Every Hero Wears a Cape. Plan and Practice Your Escape!*" (2019) You should practice your plan twice a year. Then before that it was, "*Look. Listen. Learn. Be aware - fire can happen anywhere*" (2018). The year before that it was "*Every Second Counts: Plan 2 Ways Out!*" in (2017), you should have a primary and alternate escape route.

Then in 2016 we stated with, *“Don’t Wait, Check the Date! Replace Smoke Alarms Every 10 Years.”* These actions will add in the chances of you getting the early warning notifications. Everyone should “learn the sounds of fire safety.” By everyone knowing the sounds and meaning this will make the difference between life and death!

Everyone should plan, prepare, and practice fire safety all year long at work and at home. Having a plan on what to do in case of an “emergency.” This plan should be well documented. It should include the use of pictures or drawings, and practiced at least twice a year. The whole family should know what to do and where to go in case of any emergency. Another recommended practice should be to rehearse your “emergency plan” both during daytime and at night because everything looks a whole lot different at night!

Just like at home, your work place should be just as well equipped with an emergency plan. “Here at the 187th Fighter Wing it is mandatory for all members to know what to do, who to call, and where to go in case of an emergency. Your Safety office along with the Fire Prevention Section are the two primary resources here to assist you.

Some of the keys to having a safe workplace and at home are:

1. Keep work area free of waste paper, trash, and any other items that can easily catch fire.
2. Electrical cords should not be daisy chained with a surge protector, used as permanent wiring, and be in good working order.
3. Use the right size cord with the equipment you’re using.
4. Don’t overload your circuits.
5. Unplug and/or turn off electrical appliances and equipment when not in use. Be sure to double check at the end of each workday.
6. Keep anything that might burn away from heat producing equipment; open flames, and are turned off space heater and coffee pot when not in use.
7. All appliances are required to be plugged directly into a wall outlet. You cannot use a surge protector or an extension cord with any type of appliances at any time.

If at any time you do have an emergency and need to evacuate while at the workplace or at home you should go to your designated meeting area, take accountability of everyone, and call 911. Once you are out, stay out!

This year’s Fire Prevention week is Oct 03-09: *“Learn the Sounds of Fire safety!”* there will be banners and signs displayed on base and a display table at the HQ, bldg. #1502 on Saturday Oct 2. Please take time to come by and pick up free information pamphlets and other goodies.