



Hot Flashes

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The January 12th earthquake in Haiti should serve as a timely reminder for Americans to prepare for natural and man-made disasters now!

Here in southwestern Illinois, natural disasters that can adversely impact our community are:

- Earthquakes
- Winter storms - snow & ice
- Thunderstorms
- Tornados
- Urban Floods
- Extreme Heat

Man-made threats come from:

- Chemical or hazardous materials releases
- Acts of Terrorism
- Structure and other types of fire
- Mine subsidence

Taking the time to plan and prepare can literally make the difference between surviving and death. The two human factors that impact survivability are: apathy and complacency.

Prepare - Plan - Stay Informed



Retired Fire Chiefs James "Jim" Melichar (left) and Gayle C. Schmisser have each been

volunteering at the Signal Hill Fire Department for 50 Years. Jim and Gayle have shared some of their thoughts about being a volunteer firefighter on page 2.

Emergency - Dial 9-1-1
Remain Calm. Give location, name and type of emergency clearly.



Always let the telecommunicator hang up first.

Non-Emergency.....277-3500
Administrative.....397-1995

At its Annual Appreciation Dinner on February 27th, the Signal Hill Fire Department recognized its members for their accomplishments and achievements.

Retired Chief Jim Melichar - 50 Years
Retired Chief Gayle Schmisser—50 Years
Captain Gary Bainter - 30 Years
Captain Andy Nicholson - 15 Years
Firefighter Pat Cowden - 15 Years
Associate Member Michelle Bainter - 15 Years
Associate Member Deborah Conrath - 5 Years



Firefighter Ray Barcinas - 1 Year
Firefighter Lee Bosewell - 1 Year
Associate Member Barbara Brannan - 1 Year
Firefighter Judy Daniels - 1 Year
Firefighter Steven “Chip” Sues - 1 Year
Firefighter Cody Thompson - 1 Year
Firefighter Nathan Wheeler - 1 Year

Congratulations to the Firefighters for continuing their education. Firefighters Steve Brannan, Josh Jacobs and Ray Barcinas completed Firefighter II class at Southwestern Illinois College. Firefighter Ann Perdue completed her Firefighter II program in 6 weeks through the SWIC Fire Academy.



“I remember when I joined as a volunteer firefighter in September 1959, the Fire Department didn’t have very much in the way of apparatus or personal safety equipment. There was one 15-minute and one 30-minute self-contained breathing apparatus with steel air tanks. The coats were rubber over canvas, fishing-type boots, thin plastic helmets and no gloves.

Today, each firefighter has a personal custom-fitted air mask with light-weight carbon-fiber air tanks. The three diesel-powered fire engines have 4 times the pumping capacity as the 1946 and 1948 engines had combined. The rescue truck carries tools and equipment that hadn’t even been conceived of 50 years ago.

I am very proud to have been a volunteer firefighter of this Department for 50 years, and having the opportunity to serve in each position during my tenure.

At the time when I joined, we had a Class 10 fire rating—today we are a Class 3—which is very good. I am very proud of that.”—Retired Fire Chief James Melichar.

“Growing up in the Signal Hill neighborhood , I can remember when the property where the fire house is located was a cow pasture. After a house fire, and the East St. Louis or Belleville Departments would not come, a group of us in the area got together and formed the Signal Hill Fire Protection District.

After acquiring the first fire truck, the next task was a building. Because of WW II, building materials were scarce. The first firehouse was constructed to be no wider than the largest steel roof beam that was available at the time.

I joined the Fire Department when I turned 21 years old. I served as the Firemen’s Picnic Chairman starting in 1968 until the last one in 1988. I also was the Fire Chief from 1978 to 1992.

I can’t help but think how very proud the original firemen would be to see how the Fire Department has grown from its humble beginnings of one fire truck, and a one-bay firehouse, to what it is today.”—Retired Fire Chief Gayle Schmisser.



Emergency Operations in 2009

Emergency responses were up in 2009 to 169 incidents, compared to the previous 117 responses made in 2008. While this is a significant increase, it is in line with a twenty-year average of 165.2 responses per year. The only in-District “structure” fire was a chimney, which was contained to the flue assembly.

Most notably, only four fires that had property damage were recorded. In addition to the flue fire, two passenger vehicles and a commercial lawn mower accounted for only \$15,300 of total fire damages.

Structure Fires - 6
Other Fires & Incidents - 11
Rescue/Emergency Med - 3
False Alarms - 34
Mutual Aid (Given) - 71
HazMat Responses - 14
Other Hazardous Responses - 11
All Other Responses - 19

Total of All Incidents -169

Volunteer firefighters spent 106.5 hours on emergency responses in 2009 or 37.57 minutes per call. In addition, firefighters logged in 3446 hours of continuing education and training.

Overall, it was a very good year in terms of the amount of property damage caused by fires. Two vehicles and a commercial lawn mower were the only significant incidents that involved a dollar loss.



February 11, Signal Hill volunteer firefighters examine the remains of a bedroom fire in the Shepherd Hills Subdivision. The lone occupant was alerted by a smoke detector and found the bedroom on fire. The occupant immediately called **9-1-1** to report the fire and left the house. An electric blanket on the bed may have ignited the fire.

When purchasing electric powered appliances/devices, always look for the Underwriters Laboratories or the Factory Mutual seal of approval.

Firefighters responded quickly and contained the fire to the bedroom. Northwest firefighters also responded and assisted with Rapid Intervention Team duties along with salvage and overhaul.

Smoke Detectors Work!

Barbecue Safety

Unattended cooking is the leading cause of residential fires in the United States. Even when cooking outdoors, grills should never be left unattended.

- Before using a grill, check the connection between the propane tank and the fuel line. Make sure the venturi tubes - where the air and gas mix - are not blocked.
- Do not overfill the propane tank.
- Do not wear loose clothing while cooking at a barbecue grill.
- Be careful when using lighter fluid. Do not add fluid to an already lit fire because the flame can flash back up into the container and explode.
- Keep all matches and lighters away from children. Teach your children to report any loose matches or lighters to an adult immediately. Supervise children around outdoor grills.
- Dispose of hot coals properly - douse them with plenty of water, and stir them to ensure that the fire is out. Never place them in plastic, paper, or wooden containers.
- Never grill/barbecue in enclosed areas - carbon monoxide could be produced.
- Make sure everyone knows to Stop, Drop and Roll in case a piece of clothing does catch fire. Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number if a burn warrants serious medical attention.



Storm Safety

Spring and summertime bring hot weather, family vacations and severe thunderstorms. Those thunderstorms do more than change your afternoon plans—they cause a lot of damage. A bolt of lightning can cause injury or death, fire, and destruction of electric-powered equipment. Lightning is electricity, and electricity is always looking for the fastest way to reach the earth. Water, metal, trees, and even people can serve as a conductor to provide that path to ground.

When a thunderstorm threatens, you should get inside. Even though the thunderstorm may not be directly overhead, lightning can strike several miles from the parent cloud. Hilltops, hillsides, and buildings surrounded by flat fields all tend to attract lightning. A wooden rain shelter or stand of trees doesn't provide adequate protection.

If you are caught outside, you should avoid being higher than your surrounding area. In an open area, find a low spot to wait out the storm. Stay away from open water and get off yard tractors, or other open metal vehicles. You should also avoid wire fences, clotheslines, metal pipes or towers of any type. Do not stand underneath a telephone pole or a tall isolated tree.

After a storm passes, consider any downed power line as being energized and do not approach - notify AmerenIP at 1-800-755-5000.

Never attempt to cross a flooded roadway or enter flowing water in ditches, streams, or creeks.



Fact - In 2008, more people died in the Midwest from the flooding caused by Hurricane Ike, than died in Texas, where the hurricane came ashore.

Why are Smoke Alarms Important?

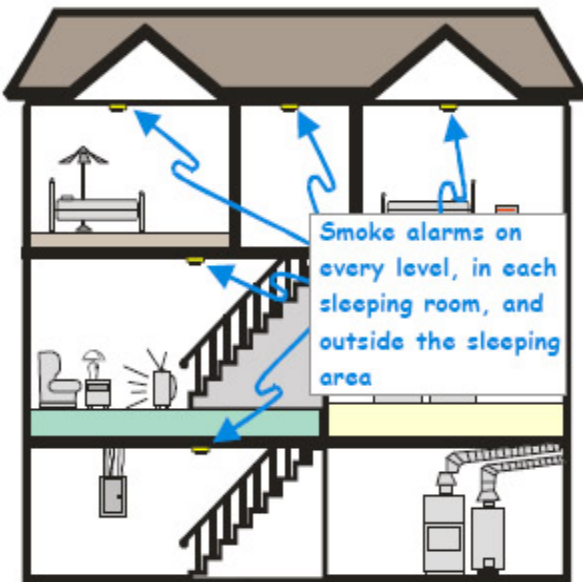
Every year in the United States, about 3,000 people lose their lives in residential fires. In a fire, smoke and deadly gases tend to spread farther and faster than heat. That's one reason why most fire victims die of smoke and toxic gases, not as a result of burns. A majority of fatal fires happen when families are asleep because occupants are unaware of the fire until there is not adequate time to escape. A smoke alarm stands guard around the clock, and when it first senses smoke, sounds a shrill alarm. This often allows a family the precious, but not unlimited, time it takes to escape.



About two-thirds of home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms are considered to be one of the best and least expensive means of providing an early warning of a potentially deadly fire and could reduce the risk of dying from a fire in your home by almost half.

Where Should Smoke Alarms be Installed?

When installing a smoke alarm, many factors influence where you will place it, including how many are to be installed. Consider placing alarms along your escape path to assist in exiting in limited visibility conditions. In general, you should place alarms in the center of a ceiling or, if you place them on a wall, they should be 6—12 inches below the ceiling.



Replace batteries every year
Replace smoke alarms every 10 years

- Smoke Alarms should be installed on every level of the home, outside sleeping areas and inside bedrooms.
- Replace smoke alarm batteries at least annually, such as when resetting clocks in the fall or spring.
- Test all smoke alarms in your house once a month.
- Do not place a smoke alarm too close to a kitchen appliance or fireplace, as this may result in nuisance alarms.
- Avoid locating alarms near bathrooms, heating appliances, windows, or ceiling fans.
- Replace smoke alarms that are more than 10 years old. Smoke alarms don't last forever.
- Develop and practice a fire escape plan, because working smoke alarms and a fire escape plan will increase your protection in case of a fire.

Working smoke detectors reduce fire deaths and injuries by 50%!

&

Don't forget to install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms.

Some Recently Discovered Fire Department History

Last June, the Fire Department received a copy of an 8mm home movie (converted to a DVD) of the first fire truck. The movie was in color and was taken in 1946. It was given to the Fire Department by Roberta Allard-Cook, a daughter of one of the original firefighters.

The first few minutes of the movie are of an olive-drab 500 gpm pumper that was reportedly ready to be shipped to support the WWII efforts in the European theater. The next few minutes show Eugene “Bud” Towers placing labels on a freshly painted white pumper followed by training drills at Signal Hill Church and Signal Hill School and then certification testing of drafting/pumping operations at Grand Marias (Frank Holten) State Park.

The movie ends with firefighters enjoying a home-made fried chicken dinner at the Ibrag family home, along with an accordion and fiddle duet. We are grateful to the Allard-Cook family for having this movie copied and donated to the Department. It will be placed into the archives.



The International 500-gallon-per-minute pumper was purchased from the War Assets Corporation for \$3511.35. The pumper was one of 28 that were located at the Granite City Army Depot. Correspondence from the spring of 1946 indicates that to purchase the pumper required the intervention of Congressman Melvin C. Price. In a series of letters and telegrams between the Department organizers, the War Assets Corporation and Congressman Price, the pumper was secured. The correspondence cites the need for the pumper for the newly formed Fire Protection District that had

“approximately five hundred families with property ranging from \$3,000 to \$50,000 in value per unit, also including a public school with an enrollment of approximately three hundred students.”

The pumper was sold in 1963 to a fire department in Missouri.



The Signal Hill Fire Department
Welcomes New Members

Your Name Goes Here!

Improving the Quality of Life in Our
Community 24/7—365 Days a Year

Call 397-1995 to Volunteer



This job is hot.

**Think you can
stand the heat?**

Join the Signal Hill Fire Department

Signal Hill

Fire Department

329 Hazel Avenue
Belleville, Illinois 62223

NONPROFIT ORG.
CARRIER ROUTE
PRESORT

PAID

Belleville, Illinois
PERMIT NO. 880



To Report a Fire Dial 9-1-1

*Seat Belts
Save Lives*



This edition of Hot Flashes was edited and prepared for mailing by Mary, Patricia & Stephanie.

Signal Hill Firefighters Ribs & Raffle Day



Sunday - June 27th

11:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

January 21, A two-vehicle accident on Foley Drive required fire-fighters to remove the doors from both autos in order to extricate the drivers. Firefighters used hydraulic rescue tools and then assisted paramedics with the safe removal of the victims. Firefighters also rendered the vehicles safe and cleared debris from the roadway.

