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## Fire safety hits home

by Valerie Reynolds

In the wake of the tragic October 17th Cook County Administration Building fire that claimed the lives of six people, fire safety has become an issue that many families are beginning to look at more seriously.

"I don't know if it was because of the fire or if it was because of the sale," said Ace Hardware store manager Tyrone Perry. "But our store quickly ran through the fire extinguishers we had on sale in October."

October was National Safety Month that Ace recognized with a sale on many of the store's safety appliances. However, the store located in the Loop at 26 N. Wabash saw fire extinguishers go faster than any of the other appliances that were on sale.

The National Fire Prevention Association reports that in 2002, there were 389,000 reported home fires in the United States, resulting in 2,670 deaths. There are, however, several simple precautions that can be taken to help prevent fire from destroying homes and lives.

The Chicago Fire Department lists these easy tips to prevent or, even survive a fire in your home or building.

**1. Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery:** Adopt a simple, potentially lifesaving habit, change the batteries in your smoke detector when you change your clocks in the fall and spring.



**2. Check Your Smoke Detectors:** After inserting a fresh battery, check to make sure the smoke detector actually works by pushing the safety test button.

**3. Count Your Smoke Detectors:** Install at least one smoke detector on every level of your home, including the basement and family room and, most important, outside all bedrooms.

**4. Vacuum Your Smoke Detectors:** Each month, clean your smoke detectors of dust and cobwebs to ensure their sensitivity.

**5. Change Your Flashlight Batteries:** To make sure your emergency flashlights work when needed, use high-quality alkaline batteries. Note: Keep a working flashlight near

your bed, in the kitchen, basement and family room, and use it to signal for help in the event of a fire.

**6. Install Fire Extinguishers:** Install a fire extinguisher in or near your kitchen and know how to use it. Purchase an all-purpose fire extinguisher that is listed by an accredited testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratory.

**7. Plan and Practice Your Escape:** Create at least two different escape routes and practice them with the entire family.

Children are at double the risk of dying in a home fire because they often become scared and confused during fires. Make sure your children understand that a smoke detector signals a home fire and that they recognize its alarm.

As experts predict that heating costs for this winter are expected to rise, many Chicago residents will seek alternative ways to heat their homes, with space heaters as the most common.

Although space heaters are sometimes a less expensive, convenient way to stay warm during the cold weather, they can also be a dangerous or sometimes even deadly appliance.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, supplemental room heaters, such as wood and coal-burning stoves, kerosene heaters, gas or electrical space heaters cause more than one-fifth of all residential fires, and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) esti-

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# Home fire safety

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mates that about 300 people die each year in fires started by these heaters.

Despite these numbers, there are ways to keep safe while using space heaters. The CPSC offers several safety tips for heating homes with space heaters. The first thing they recommend is to select a space heater with a guard around the flame area or heating element and to choose a space heater that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.

The CPSC also recommends never leaving a space heater on when you go to sleep and to never place a space heater close to any sleeping person. It is also very important to remember to turn the space heater off if you leave the area and to keep children and pets away from them.

For more information on how to stay safe while using space heaters request a free booklet entitled "What You Should Know about Space Heaters." Send a post card to "Space Heater Booklet," U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C. 20207.