

CHECKLIST #18**TIPS FOR FIRE PREVENTION FOR SMALL BUSINESS**

By Captain Bud Gundersen

These few simple precautions can go a long way toward preventing a fire from destroying your business:

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

- ❑ Every business location is required to have at least one extinguisher. Required extinguishers must be serviced yearly, or immediately after use, by a person having a valid certificate. Extinguishers must be installed on approved brackets or set in a fire department approved cabinet. They must be conspicuously located or have signs which identify the location. Please contact your local fire station if you have any questions regarding the size, type, or placement of extinguishers.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

- ❑ Extension cords are often misused and can be very hazardous. They should be used only for temporary wiring, not permanent use. They should not be run through ceilings, walls, doors or windows. Also, beware of the extension cord "octopus." Using multiple outlet adapters to run numerous items off a single outlet can be dangerous. It is much safer to install additional outlets rather than to use adapters and extension cords.

EXIT DOORS

- ❑ For security purposes many business owners lock rear exit doors. Even in a small shop, someone can be trapped by a fire and need to rely on the rear door to escape. All required exit doors must be unlocked during business hours or have escape hardware which allows them to be opened from the inside without a key. This is a crucial issue to life safety. Both security and fire safety can be accommodated by installing escape hardware or a door alarm.

ADDRESS NUMBERS

- ❑ Make sure your address is clearly visible from the street. If you have a fire or medical emergency, the fire department wants to find you fast. It is also very helpful if someone can wait for them out on the street and flag them in.

DATA BACK-UP

- ❑ While protecting your employees will always be your first priority, mitigation of business loss will include more than fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems and quick fire response. Your business needs to protect its records and data files. Our reliance on electronic data makes data protection a major concern for your business survival. Even in small businesses, it is crucial to back-up your data files at least once a week.

FIRE-PROOF SAFES

- ❑ Keep a copy of your electronic files and critical data/ information in a fire-resistant safe. If you are in a hurricane evacuation zone, flood zone or vulnerable to other areas, then an alternate site (outside of the vulnerability zone) should be selected and a fire-resistant safe kept there for keeping records during a potential evacuation.

A FEW MORE TIPS...

Water Heaters: The burner flame can easily start a fire if flammable items are placed too close. Maintain at least three feet of clearance around your hot water heater.

Electrical Panels: In the event of a fire, three feet of clearance around the electrical panel is necessary to access circuit breakers.

Exit Aisles: Must be clear of storage at all times.

Fire Control Valves: Often located in obscure areas of buildings, fire control valves can get blocked by storage. Maintain a three-foot access aisle and make sure that the valves are well marked.