

## The Rocky Hill Fire Department Reminds Residents To Practice Spring Safety While Spring Cleaning

As you make your way from room to room completing your spring cleaning, pay special attention to the following:

- **Dryer Vents** - If clothes are still damp at the end of a typical drying cycle or requires longer times than normal, this may be a sign that the lint screen or the exhaust duct is blocked. Pay particular attention to lint build-up in clothes dryer vents and in the exhaust ducts. **Correct by** *cleaning the lint screen/filter before or after drying each load of clothes. Clean the dryer vent and exhaust duct periodically. Clean behind the dryer, where lint can build up. Keep the area around the dryer clean and free of clutter.*
- **Electrical Wiring and Outlets** - Overloaded circuits and extension cords pose a real fire threat. Misusing electrical cords (such as running them under rugs, or putting them in high traffic areas) can result in electrical fires, which account for thousands of fires each year. **Correct by** *replacing frayed wires or cords immediately. If you see overloaded wall sockets, remove some of the items and find a new outlet for them. Remove any cords running under carpeting or rugs. Do a quick scout of all rooms in your home to make sure no cords are trapped against walls (where heat can build up.)*
- **Electrical Appliances** - Most often the electrical appliances which cause electrical fires are electric stoves, ovens, dryers, heating units, stereos and televisions. **Correct by** *always unplug electric appliances when not in use. Confirm that no flammable materials are within three feet of an electrical heater. Pay particular attention to stored items in basements and attics, by making sure they are far away from heaters.*
- **Kids and Matches/Lighters** - Children playing with matches or lighters are responsible for more than 35,000 fires annually in the United States. You may learn of your children's curiosity with fire while you're spring cleaning. Look under all beds, and in "secret places" such as closets or basements, where your children may leave evidence that they have played with matches or lighters. Lock up all lighters or matches and reiterate to your children that fire is absolutely not a toy.
- **Use Smoke Alarms.** Smoke alarms save thousands of lives each year. The likelihood that they will save your life greatly increases when you install smoke alarms on every floor of your home (including basement and attic), both inside and outside of your sleeping areas.
- **Smoke Alarm Maintenance** - Add smoke alarm maintenance to your spring cleaning list. They require only three minor scheduled tasks: One, replace the batteries once a year; two, keep them clean. Just as you dust your bookshelves, make sure that your smoke alarm is free from dust and debris, as it may interfere with proper functioning. Thirdly, test your smoke alarms monthly.
- **Plan Your Fire Escape** - Meet with everyone in your family to design a fire escape plan. This should include:

- Educating your family about fire. This includes reminding them to stay low to the floor during a fire, and reinforcing that they should NEVER open a door that feels hot.
  - Practice escaping from each room in the house. Make every member of your family participates in “practice runs” so that all understand how to escape from each room.
  - Plan your safety meeting spot. Select a location outside of the home where you will meet after escaping a fire. This could be in your neighbors’ front yard, across the street, or three doors down on the sidewalk, but it should be a minimum of 100 yards from the home.
- **Cleaning Safety**
  - Household and pool chemicals, paints, and poisons should be properly marked and stored under lock and key, away from children's reach. Properly dispose of any that are leaking, expired, or that look bad.
  - When cleaning up hazardous chemicals, wear rubber gloves and follow the safety directions of the packaging. Never mix chemicals in the same container if you don't know how to dispose of them, seek outside advice <http://themdc.org/what-we-do/environment-health-safety/household-hazardous-waste-collection> and never put them into the trash or pour down the drain.
  - Make sure gasoline and cleaning fluids are well marked and stored in a cool, dry place away from the house and out of the reach of children and pets. Use only approved containers for gasoline storage.
  - Never use gasoline to clean skin, clothes, auto parts, or floors.
  - Check your barbecue grill for leaks and cracks, and be sure to store any propane tanks away from your house and garage. REMEMBER: new codes PROHIBIT the use and storage of cooking and heating devices on balconies of apartments and some condominiums.
  - Remove all fire hazards, including stacks of rags, newspaper, and magazines. Pay special attention to the spaces around your furnace, hot water tank, fireplace, space heaters and dryer, as well as under the stairs.

### **Yard Work Safety**

- Limber up. Yard chores may seem easy, but they involve muscles you probably haven't used in a while.
- Always wear protective clothing when you handle pesticides and fertilizers.
- Rake your yard before you mow to prevent any stones and loose debris from launching into the air.
- Never operate a mower in your bare feet and avoid wearing loose clothing

- When refueling your mower, make sure the engine is off and cool. Don't spill gasoline on a hot engine, and don't smoke while pouring gasoline.
- Never leave your mower operational while unattended.
- Don't use electrical mowers on wet grass.
- Wear proper eye protection when operating trimmers, lawn edgers, pruners and power saws.
- When pruning trees, be careful not to let metal ladders or trimmers come into contact with overhead wires.
- Make sure blade guards are in place on all cutting equipment
- Don't let tools get wet unless they are labeled "immersible".
- Unplug all tools when not in use.
- Make sure tools are in the "off" position before you plug it in.
- Before you do any "hands-on" weed removal, make sure you know how to identify poison ivy, sumac, oak, and similar toxic plants. Find out ahead of time how to treat the rashes they cause to reduce the irritation.
- When using a ladder, check for safe and proper placement. Be aware of any obstructions, overhead wires, electrical, cable, phone and tree branches.