

CTSI requests that candles be removed from county buildings

Due to the recent major fire loss in Prowers County, CTSI's Loss Prevention department requests that all candles be removed from all county buildings with no exceptions. Open flames (i.e., candles) pose an unacceptable risk of fire damage to property and nationally an increased number of fires have been attributed to burning candles. Most county-owned buildings in Colorado are not protected by sprinkler systems and counties should act accordingly.

Candle Causes Prowers County Fire

On February 20th, 2004, the Prowers County Annex building was damaged extensively by a fire that was started by a candle. The building has been rendered unusable until repairs can be made. Employees who work in the building—including employees of the Social Services department, the Health Department and Colorado State University Cooperative Extension—have been temporarily relocated. Thankfully, no one was injured or killed.

The candle was located on an employee's desk in one of the building's offices. It was reported that the burning candle was perceived to be extinguished when the employee left the office. Approximately an hour later, the candle flame ignited some papers on a tack board behind the candle. Because the office door was closed, the fire used up the oxygen in the office and put itself out.

A short time later, smoke was reported in the hallway. When employees opened the door to investigate, oxygen filled the room and the fire flared up again. The employees who opened the door were forced to flee the area. The smoke then filled the building and subsequently someone called the fire department to report the fire.

Several offices were heavily damaged by the fire and the rest of the building and its contents were damaged by the smoke. The county hopes to make the necessary repairs and get the displaced employees back to work in the Annex building within a few months. The cost is estimated to exceed \$500,000, making it one of the most—if not the most—expensive property claims incurred by the pool.

Increase in Fires Caused by Candles

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reported a 400% increase in residential fires caused by candles in the 1990s. The NFPA also reports that 4% of all residential fires are caused by burning candles.

An increasing number of people are using candles to scent their homes and offices. If you want to scent your office, CTSI recommends using a *non-electric* potpourri or air freshener. In fact, one electrical air freshener, the Glade® Extra Outlet Scented Oil Air Freshener, has been recalled because it has caused so many fires.

Fire Drills

When was the last time you conducted a fire drill? The NFPA recommends that organizations conduct two fire drills per year.

Fire drills on a regular basis should be a part of every county's safety/risk management program and are a good way to prevent people from being injured during a fire.

For more information, contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.

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