

## **Wakefield Fire Department Suggested Guidelines for Teaching Fire Safety to Children**

Every year the Wakefield Fire Department talks to hundreds of children through both fire station tours and trips to local schools. While these talks can be an entertaining and memorable experience for the children, they are also an important educational opportunity in terms of teaching children fire safety.

The members of the Wakefield Fire Department are engaged in the business of saving lives, whether it involved a response to a fire after it has occurred or, more importantly, before it happens. The simple truth is that we are far more likely to save a child's life through fire safety education and the knowledge of preventing or taking proper action during a fire than by the actual rescue of a child during a fire incident. As we all know, serious burn injuries often have already occurred before we even leave the station.

Teaching fire safety, when done properly, improves the community's level of awareness regarding the dangers of fire and projects a positive image of the Wakefield Fire Department to the general public. The responsibility of teaching children fire safety cannot be fulfilled during the one week in October designated as "Fire Prevention Week." It must be a year-round effort.

The following guidelines have been developed in an attempt to standardize fire safety education conducted by the Wakefield Fire Department. It is important that the children received a clear consistent fire safety message from the fire department regardless of who does the speaking.

As with all other fire department activities, some members enjoy this work more than others. Those that enjoy teaching children fire safety should not take offense to these guidelines, as they are intended to serve as a common core of fire safety knowledge and are not intended to stifle creativity or innovation by the speaker during the talk. Members are reminded, however, that whatever they state during a talk will be noted by the audience. As always, discretion must be exercised by all department members whenever they address the public.

### **General Guidelines for Fire Safety Talks**

1. Department members should be in uniform and neat in appearance when addressing a group.
2. Children should be taught in a warm, comfortable environment that is conducive to learning. They should be seated during the talk whenever possible. For young children, gym mats are very effective.
3. When addressing a large number of students, arrange them in a semi-circle around you so they can all see and hear you.
4. Keep in mind the age of the children you are talking to. Avoid lengthy or difficult explanations that can cause confusions and misunderstandings.
5. If you decide to don your protective gear as part of the talk, do it in front of the children, explaining each piece of gear as you put it on. Don SCBA whenever possible, explaining what

is in the tank (air). This allows the children to hear what a working SCBA sounds like as well as what a fire fighter will look like with SCBA donned and operating.

6. Be careful of letting very small or young children wear your fire helmet. There have been several documented cases of severe neck injuries being sustained by these children when wearing the helmet. Members can place the helmet on the child's head but should keep the weight of the helmet off the child's head using both hands.

### **Guidelines for Fire Station Tours**

1. Wherever possible, the on-duty group shall receive advance notice of a tour group so they can properly prepare for it.
2. Department members who do the tour should welcome the group and inform them immediately that in the event of an alarm that everyone report immediately to the rear of the station and remain there until the apparatus has safely departed. Test the emergency tone so that the children will know what it sounds like.
3. No children are to climb fire apparatus or wander around the station unattended.
4. Move children to rear of station and have them sit down on gym mat or chairs provided.
5. Give appropriate talk for the age group involved (guidelines for each age group to follow).
6. If time permits, allow children in front seat of apparatus, show them the hose tower, dispatch, and fire pole. Children must be assisted onto apparatus by a department member. Demonstrate fire pole if possible.
7. Thank the children for their attention and give out souvenir (plastic fire helmets, etc.) if available.
8. Pass out educational materials to teachers and parents if available.

### **Fire Safety Talk for Preschoolers (Age 3-5)**

(10-15 minutes for talk, 10 minutes for station tour)

Remember that this group will have a very short attention span. Keep them interested by making them participate in the talk. Ask them questions that they can answer by raising their hand. The introduction should mention that the fire department teaches children to be fire safe.

1. Show them a smoke detector and ask them if they know what it is. Activate the detector (warn them first!) to let them hear what it sounds like. The only thing they need to know is that when the detector sounds, they should GET OUT, STAY OUT. Make them repeat it back to you several times.

2. Ask them what hot things are in their house that can hurt them (stoves, irons, microwaves, BBQ, etc.) Make sure to mention hot water and matches and lighters. Hot water burns like fire. If they find matches and lighters the correct message is: don't touch them and tell a grown-up. Playing with fire could hurt your house, family, pets and toys.
3. Explain and demonstrate STOP, DROP, and ROLL. This is by far the most important thing you can teach. Make them repeat loudly STOP, DROP, and ROLL.

STOP – do not run (fire gets bigger if you run)

DROP – lie down on the ground (COVER YOUR FACE)

ROLL – over and over, back and forth until the fire goes out

At this age, it is very important that all the children actually do stop, drop, and roll. Correct them and clap after each child finishes.

4. Summarize what they have learned: when detector sounds GET OUT, STAY OUT and when your clothes are on fire STOP, DROP, and ROLL. Thank the children for their attention and either show them around the fire station or don your protective gear (including SCBA). Remember to don gear in complete view of children explaining what you are doing. Make sure they know what is making the noise (air).
5. Say your goodbyes and pass out helmets to children and educational material to teachers and parents.

### **Fire Safety Talk for K-Second Grade (Ages 6-8)**

15-30 minute talks, longer if you use a film

This group has an attention span considerably longer than pre-schoolers. Start your talk off by stating that fire fighters teach fire safety. If you are in a classroom area with access to a VCR (check ahead of time), you could start off by showing the children a short film. Several age appropriate films such as "Sparky's ABC's" or "Dick Van Dyke's Friends" are available in the Chief's office. "An Ounce of Prevention" is also a good choice.

1. Show them a smoke detector, ask them what it is. Sound the detector (warn them!) and tell them when they hear it they should GET OUT, STAY OUT! Make them repeat this several times.
2. Explain and demonstrate STOP, DROP and ROLL. What do you do if your clothes catch on fire – "STOP, DROP and ROLL." Have them repeat this several times.

STOP – do not run (fire gets bigger if you run)

DROP – lie down on the ground (COVER YOUR FACE)

ROLL – over and over, back and forth until the fire goes out

If time permits, have as many children demonstrate this as possible. Don't forget to correct them and clap after each demonstration.

3. Talk to the children about burns. You only put cool water on a burn – tell them COOL WATER COOLS A BURN. Make sure to mention that they tell a grownup that they were burned so it can be looked at.
4. Briefly talk about matches and lighters. Tell the children not to touch them and to tell an adult. Playing with matches can hurt someone. If you run into a problem here find out what the child likes (toy, pet, house) and tell him/her that playing with matches could hurt it.
5. Crawl low under smoke – Why? Ask them where the good air is in a room on fire. They should be able to understand that good air is near the floor.
6. Escape Plan – If you wake up at night and your house is on fire – GET OUT, STAY OUT – cover these points:
  - a) Roll out of bed
  - b) Know two ways out
  - c) If you must escape through smoke, crawl under it. (A blanket can be held by two people at waist level to simulate smoke so the children can crawl under it).
  - d) Get outside to a special meeting place. Give examples of a special meeting place (tree, neighbors, etc.)
7. Tell them the fire department emergency telephone number 245-1313 (not 911). Tell them they can call for any emergency. Make sure that the children know to call from a neighbor's house if their house is on fire.
8. Thank them for their attention and answer any questions they may have. If the children have come to the station, a brief look at the apparatus, hose tower, and dispatch area could wrap up their visit.
9. Pass out plastic helmets to children and education materials to the teachers and parents if they are available.

## **Fire Safety Talk for Third to Fifth Grade (Ages 9-11)**

Time duration 30-45 minutes

These children are at the age where they should be taking more responsibility for their own fire safety. Your introduction should reflect that fire safety is everyone's responsibility. If you are in a classroom area with access to a VCR (check ahead of time), a good start would be a short movie such as "Kids Fire News" soon to be available in the Chief's office.

### **1. Explain and demonstrate STOP, DROP, and ROLL**

STOP – do not run, running fans the flames

DROP – down on the ground right away and cover your face

ROLL – back and forth, over and over, until the fire is out

At this age the children should have a good grasp of Stop, Drop and Roll. Ask if everyone understands it and help out those who don't. Mention that a person can do Stop, Drop and Roll for someone else if they have to. Utilize a blanket or jacket to demonstrate how to smother a fire on another person or have a few children practice rolling someone else on the ground.

2. Talk briefly about playing with fire. Children should be told not to play with matches and lighters. If they should find them, they should bring them to an adult so that younger children will not get a hold of them. Legal campfires (camping, scouting activities, etc.) are OK with proper adult supervision. Fire out of control is very dangerous. Never use gasoline (flammable liquids) on or around fire. Stay away from fireworks. (Use 911 TV show as example).
3. Home Fire Safety/Escape Plan
  - a) Don't use stove or microwave without supervision
  - b) Keep hot things away from small children (they are responsible for their younger brothers and sisters)
  - c) Know two ways out of every room
  - d) If you wake up to smoke in your bedroom, roll out of bed (why?) – good breathing air is low to the floor.
  - e) If you must escape through smoke, crawl low under it. (A useful illustration is to use a blanket and have the children crawl under it with two people holding it at waist level to simulate smoke.)
  - f) Before opening a door, test it with the back of your hand to feel the door or door knob. If the door is hot, use your second exit.
  - g) Maintain smoke detectors, checking them once a month and replacing batteries once a year.
  - h) Everyone to go outside to a special meeting place. This is a spot that everyone agrees upon and knows about before a fire (give examples).
  - i) Never go back into a burning building – GET OUT, STAY OUT.
  - j) Report a fire from your neighbor's house.

4. Memorize 245-1313 – call for fire, medical emergencies, etc. Give name, address of emergency, type of problem. Dispatcher may ask for telephone number – give number that you are calling from (look at phone or ask someone).
5. False alarms are dangerous to:
  - a) Fire fighters
  - b) General public on road
  - c) People with real emergencies

Fire boxes can be pulled for any emergency, not just fires. If you need to pull a fire box, stay at box and tell the fire department where the problem is.

6. Take fire drills seriously, they can save your life.
7. Thank the children for their attention and answer any questions, pass out fire education materials, if available. Tell them to go home and check their detectors and report what they found to their teacher.

### **Fire Safety Talk for Sixth and Eighth Grade (Ages 12-14)**

Time duration 30-60 minutes

The introduction should center around making these adolescents responsible for their own fire safety. Emphasis should be placed on the use of common sense in daily activities and on looking out for the safety of younger children that don't know enough to protect themselves from fire. A good movie to show this age group is "Fire Power" which is available in the Chief's office.

1. Review STOP, DROP and ROLL

STOP – do not run, running fans the flames

DROP – down on the ground right away and cover your face

ROLL – back and forth, over and over, until the fire is out

2. Consider learning first aid and CPR by taking a Red Cross or American Heart Association course. Make sure they know that only cool water should be used on a burn injury.

3. Use fire properly.

- a) Learn how to build a safe campfire.
- b) Never use flammable liquids on a fire (911 TV show has some examples).
- c) Legal and constantly attended campfires are OK (adult supervision, camp grounds, etc.)
- d) Make sure fire is completely out, keep plenty of water nearby.

Fire out of control is very dangerous. Fires lit in the woods can get away very quickly and can hurt people (fire fighters too).

4. Stay away from fireworks – you can be seriously injured by them. Attend public fireworks displays that are safe, legal, and free.
5. Practice home fire safety.
  - a) Learn to cook with ovens and microwaves safely.
  - b) Respect and stay away from electricity.
  - c) Keep hot liquids, pans, and irons away from small children. Don't forget that hot water in tubs can scald too.
  - d) Make an exit plan for your home and know two ways out.
  - e) Should a fire occur at night when you are in bed, roll out of bed, crawl low under smoke, and test your door with the back of your hand to see if it is hot. If it is, use your second exit.
  - f) Everyone should meet outside at a special meeting place the family has agreed upon before the fire.
  - g) Never go back in, GET OUT, STAY OUT.
  - h) Call the fire department from a neighbor's house 245-1313 (not 911). Give your name, address of fire/emergency, type of fire/emergency and a call back number. If you need an ambulance, call the fire department.
  - i) Check smoke detectors once a month, change batteries once a year. If you don't maintain your smoke detector, nothing else will matter.
6. False alarms are dangerous to
  - a) Fire fighters
  - b) General public
  - c) People with real emergencies

Your prank can kill someone. Fire boxes can be pulled for any emergency, not just fires. If you need to pull a fire box, stay at box and tell the fire department where the problem is.

7. Take fire drills/alarms seriously, they can save your life. Know two ways out of everywhere you go (movie theatre, etc.).
8. Answer any questions that the children have and pass out fire education materials, if available. Teachers could follow up with having the children make a home escape plan. Thank them for their attention.