

# Fires prompt FD action

*Outlook*  
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WINTER PARK—An unusually high number of residential fires in Winter Park over the past year — one of which resulted in the death of an elderly resident — has prompted the Winter Park Fire Department to take an active role in improving safety standards in homes of the city's low-income, elderly and disabled residents.

The department, in conjunction with the West Side Housing Corp., is offering free smoke detectors to residents who fall into any of these categories.

In addition, it is promoting fire safety awareness by offering free home inspections, advice and in-

structions on how to fireproof one's home.

According to figures from the fire department, about one-fourth of the homes in Winter Park do not have smoke detectors, and of those that do have them, an estimated one-third of them aren't working.

"Over half of the fires in this city occur in homes that don't have smoke detectors," said Fire Marshal Steve Painter. Most of those homes are in low-income sections of the city. "And a lot of people who do have them in their homes, don't know how to use them or — because of their age or disability — can't get to them," he added.

Painter said he became particularly concerned with the situa-

tion after an incident on the city's west side last fall resulted in the death of a 70-year-old resident.

A space heater in the man's bedroom malfunctioned and caught fire while he was sleeping.

"If there had been a smoke detector in that house, it would have sounded off and awakened him before the fire spread," said Painter. "Chances are he'd be alive today."

Response to the smoke detector drive has been good, said Painter. Several hundred of the devices have been donated by local businesses, and 50 were given out to residents at a West Side Housing Corp. meeting in March.