

Fires on decrease in Winter Park due to Fire Prevention Bureau

By RAE MILLER

The nationwide statistics are staggering. According to the National Fire Safety Council, fire strikes somewhere in the country each minute around the clock. More frightening is that every 80 minutes someone burns to death in a fire. But worse yet is that each year the number of lives and property lost due to fire continue to soar.

Locally, however, the number of fires in Winter Park within the last 10 years has been drastically reduced. That's largely due to the efforts of the Winter Park Fire Prevention Bureau.

The bureau is headed by Fire Marshall Jim Humphrey and is responsible for developing and implementing fire prevention programs, while inspecting all commercial buildings. The buildings are inspected for proper wiring, exits, early warning systems or any hazardous conditions that could create a fire. "Prevention is the name of the game," says Humphrey.

Prevention comes through education. The bureau conducts both formal and informal fire safety programs with any interested business, school or civic organization. The formal program consists of a lecture and hands-on demonstration using fire safety equipment. The informal programs consists of fire safety tips given by Humphrey and his two fire inspectors "anytime we get someone on a one-on-one basis."

The purpose of the program is to get people to overcome the lack of concern toward a possible fire. "It can happen to them. Hazardous fire conditions exist everywhere," says Humphrey.

Outlook, April 29, 1982

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Because over one half of all fires are home fires, Humphrey would like to see the Fire Prevention Bureau expand their fire safety programs into private homes. Presently the bureau is not authorized to knock on doors and inspect, but if requested the tax-supported bureau will arrange for a free home fire inspection. For more information, call the bureau at 644-9860, ext. 260.

According to Humphrey, "The goals of the Fire Prevention Bureau are to reduce the fires we are having through expanding education programs." And hopefully, continue to keep Winter Park as fire safe as possible.