



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Brian Barker, Public Information Officer, 503-441-9324 (pager)

TVF&R Issues Urgent Cigarette Safety Reminder After Recent Fires

Firefighters from Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue are issuing an urgent public safety notice in light of five significant structure fires in the past three months related to improperly disposed-of cigarettes. The fires killed one woman in Tigard and caused more than \$600,000 in damage. One in ten Oregon fires is started by cigarettes.

“These fires are tragic and preventable,” says TVF&R Deputy Fire Marshal John Wolff, “many of these fires were caused when people used what they thought was a safe ashtray. People need to give some thought to how they dispose of their cigarettes.”

TVF&R recommends that smokers extinguish and discard of their cigarettes in a non-combustible ashtray or appropriate metal container with a lid. “Do not use plant containers as an ashtray,” Wolff says, “potting soil contains organic material and can ignite.” Consider soaking cigarettes in water before discarding them.

Also, remember to empty your ashtray frequently. “One of our recent fires started because a butt stuffed in an over-filled ashtray caused the other cigarettes to ignite,” Wolff says, “remember, cigarettes that have been crushed out in an ashtray can still catch fire.”

The following recent fires were caused by cigarettes:

1. March 27th, 2011 – A improperly disposed of cigarette ignited bark dust outside the Wanker’s Country Store at 19995 Stafford Road.
2. March 10th, 2011 – A makeshift ashtray ignited on an apartment complex balcony at 2325 NW Schmidt Way in Washington County, causing \$400,000 in damage and displaced several families.
3. February 25th, 2011 – A cigarette caused a fire a plastic planter used as an ashtray on a apartment complex balcony in Tualatin at 18540 SW Boones Ferry Road.
4. February 20th, 2011 – A cigarette caused a tragic fire that killed a woman in Tigard’s Summerfield Community.
5. January 19th, 2011 – A cigarette ignites a planter filled with potting soil at 9301 SW Sagert Street in Tualatin. Flames spread to an apartment, causing \$155,000 in damage.

The tragic fatal fire in Tigard originated inside a condominium where the resident frequently smoked. The other four fires originated outside the structures in places where people often smoked. According to the Oregon State Fire Marshal’s Office, of all cigarette fires responded to by Oregon structure fire agencies, 82% of the fires started outside of a home; 15% are structure fires, and 2% are vehicle or other fires. Between 2005-2009, there were almost 6,400 cigarette fires in Oregon. These fires were responsible for 34 deaths, 133 injuries, and an estimated \$20 million in property loss.