

Local

Well-informed residents are key to prevention

Apartment dwellers facing many fire dangers

By CATHY TERRELL
Battalion Reporter
It's been said that there are basically three causes of fire: men, women and children.
College Station Fire Marshal Harry Davis agreed that fires are caused by people; people who don't use common sense. Unfortunately, Davis said, these people don't only endanger their own lives, but the lives of many others — particularly residents of apartment houses and other multi-family dwellings.
While Bryan Fire Marshal Ramond Janac reports only three apartment fires for 1980, College Station monthly reports from July to January show that the fire department responded to 21 calls to various apartments. Seven of these calls were recorded as fires, while others were false alarms identified as smoke smells.
Despite efforts to prevent fires conducted by the local fire departments such as voluntary inspections of apartments to check for fire hazards, the departments still spend most of their time responding to emergency calls.
Even the elaborate set of ordinances, standards and state systems does little toward preventing fires.
"In the field of fire prevention, the efforts expended in securing a well-constructed building, conducting regular inspections to control fire hazards and enforcing fire regulations are a losing battle as long as people remain uninformed about fire, its causes, and its effects," said William K. Bare in his book, "Fundamentals of Fire Prevention."
Understanding the system designed to deal with fire prevention is not easy, and, in fact, it is more difficult in Texas because Texas uses a fire insurance rating that differs from those in the other 49 states. Texas is the only state that attempts to give cities and towns credit for their fire prevention and protection activities. The theory is that the towns will improve in these areas to obtain better ratings.

Distinguished alumni to be honored

By KATHLEEN WAITREK
Battalion Reporter
The real measure of a university's success can be found in the achievements of its alumni. Texas A&M University will honor four of its former students with Distinguished Alumni Awards at spring commencement exercises Friday and Saturday.
Joe C. Denman Jr., Class of '46; R.A. Murray Fasken, Class of '38; C.E. Pat Olsen, Class of '23; and Clayton W. Williams Jr., Class of '54, will receive Texas A&M's highest award for career achievement.
The Distinguished Alumni Award is given to former students who have made significant contributions to society, shown great interest and support and whose career accomplishments have brought credit to Texas A&M.
Denman received his bachelor's degree in architecture and is an active member of the Aggie Club, Association of Former Students, Century Club and the Angelina County Texas A&M Club. He is an executive officer with Temple-Eastex, a division of Time Inc.
He has also served as a director for the Southern National Forest Products Association and the National Forest Products Association.
Fasken is a banker and current senior chairman of the board of the Midland National Bank. He has also served on the First Citibank Corp.'s board of directors.
He has been a member of the Aggie Club since its beginning and is a member of the Association of Former Students and the Midland Texas A&M Club.
Fasken served for seven years as a trustee on the Development Foundation of Texas A&M, and through the Fasken Foundation he has distributed funds to various segments of the University.
Olsen, also an active alumni at Texas A&M, has been named to "Who's Who" in the South and Southwest, Texas Hall of Fame, "T" Club and the Diamond Century Club.
Olsen Field, Texas A&M's 5,000-seat baseball stadium, was named in his honor in 1977. He has also donated money for lights, clock, scoreboard and flagpoles for the baseball stadium.
A manufacturer, Olsen is a former president of Gearech Manufacturing Co., a leader in the field of inventing and manufacturing tools used in oil fields throughout the world.
Williams is an independent oil operator and is currently chief executive officer of Clayco Inc., Williams Gas Liquids Co. and Williams Aviation Co. He received the 1979 award for distinguished service from the American Association of Petroleum Landmen and has spoken on national television on the topic of energy.
Williams is a member of the Century Club and the Association of Former Students. He is a former vice president on the board of directors and a contributor to the Texas A&M University System Press.

Four 'diplomats' to speak on female issues in world

By LAURA HATCH
Battalion Reporter
Egypt, Ethiopia, Mexico and Lebanon will be represented by female "diplomats" at the International Women's Conference on the Texas A&M University campus in June.
This conference may be the first in the Southwest region to have four internationally distinguished professional women to address international issues on women and development, Cynthia Dessel, informational representative for this conference, said.
The speakers for the conference will be Nawal El Saadawi of Egypt, Jaslene Dameja of Ethiopia, Martha Lamas of Mexico and Rosemary Sayegh of England, who is married and lives in Lebanon.
Azizah al-Hibri, assistant professor of philosophy and the originator of the conference said, "This could be the first of this type in the United States."
"I'm doing it myself as a member of the philosophy department. The event was made possible through a grant by the Title XII Strengthening Grant Program."
Organizations helping al-Hibri put the conference together are Women's Studies Association of the Southwest, American Association of University Women, Undergraduate Women's Association at Texas A&M University, and Texas A&M Women's Network.
On the first day of the conference, from 9 a.m. to noon, the guest speakers will give individual speeches followed by question-and-answer periods.
Four workshops will be held from 1:45 to 4:30 p.m., featuring the following topics: Women in Patriarchal Institutions; Women and Technological Transfer to the Third World; The Role of the U.S. Women in the International Women's Movement, and Women, Geopolitics and the Future.
A barbeque and dance will be held that evening.
On the second day, a panel discussion will be held and the same workshops will be given in the afternoon with the speakers alternating their topics.
Nawal has been active with the United Nations in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) working as an adviser on women's programs. Now she has resigned from that position and is devoting her time to writing.
Dameja is a technical adviser for the United Nations' Economic Commission for Africa in Ethiopia and is particularly interested in women's programs there.
Lamaz is an anthropologist, feminist and co-founder of the Mexican feminist Magazine "FEM."
Sayegh is a journalist and publicist.
The conference will be held June 8 and 9 in Rudder Forum and Rudder Tower and is free to the public.

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The State Board of Insurance determines a town's rating, and the local fire departments are responsible for developing programs. The positive effect of the rating system on town programs has never been established, despite claims that the rating system inspires local departments to increase their effectiveness.
Two separate evaluations are given each town — the key rate and the fire record credit.
The key rate is based on a maximum number of cents — \$1 for totally unprotected areas. Points, or cents, are added for penalties and 10 percent is deducted from the total for each fire department improvement.
Bryan has a key rate of 18 cents and College Station has a key rate of 20 cents.
Both cities are first key towns because their rates are good — under 40 cents. Key rates are determined "pretty much on an annual basis," said Jack Sawyer of ANCO Insurance. But a city may request a re-evaluation if it has made some improvements that will affect its rate.
"Most people who come in to buy insurance have no idea how the key rate is determined or how it affects their insurance costs," Sawyer said.
Most people are also unaware of the building codes and what they encompass. Bryan and College Station have adopted the Southern Standard Building Code — an imposing set of guidelines which fill a three-ring notebook.
The purpose of the building code is to control design and construction by designating the methods and materials that may be used, based on location in fire zone, type of use, height and area of the building to be constructed.
For instance, there must be windows easy to open in every bedroom. Multi-family dwellings over two stories in height must have a front and rear exit in every unit, and wooden shingles are prohibited in commercial buildings.
To supplement the building code, Bryan and College Station have passed city ordinances. One such ordinance requires that smoke detectors be in every unit of a multi-family dwelling. Older complexes may not have the detectors, however, because the ordinance is not retroactive.
Ordinances may change because of difficulty in compliance. Fire extinguishers had been required throughout large apartment complexes, but the apartment owners were losing money because they were constantly having to replace the extinguishers. Now, the extinguishers are only required in areas where they are not likely to be stolen, such as mechanical rooms.
Davis warns that merely because an apartment has a smoke detector does not mean that all fires will be detected. The fire department checks all smoke detectors when they are installed, but maintenance is often neglected. Davis said, "Sometimes the detectors need to be replaced but often all they need is a good cleaning and dusting to be made operable."
"If residents will take the time to clean and dust the detectors that will often make them operable," Davis said.

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