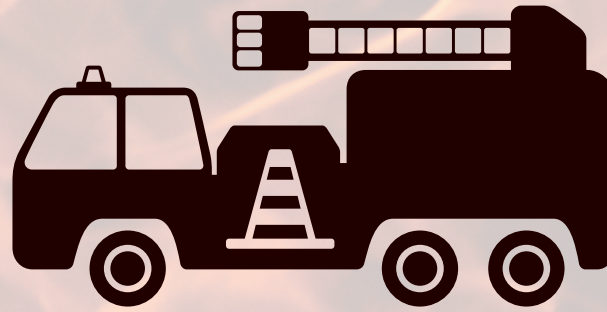




**FIRE**



**PREVENTION**



***October 14-18, 2024***



Supplement to: Cheney Free Press • Spokane Valley News Herald • Lincoln County Record-Times • Ritzville Adams County Journal • Whitman County Gazette



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# Protect your family from fire

*Cheney Free Press*

CHENEY — Here in Eastern Washington, most people associate fires with our hot, dry summer days. Few realize that many fires occur during winter; and most start in the home.

Heaters, cigarettes and candles are common causes of local fires. Washers and dryers, too.

Electrical appliances and faults cause nearly 40% of fires in homes.

Statistics show an average of 2,620 Americans die in house fires each year. Many of those fires, and the resulting deaths, could have been prevented.

Welcome to our inaugural Fire Prevention section. In the following pages you will learn tips to protect yourself, you family and your home. From dryer and chimney maintenance and cleaning to preparing a defensible space outside, the tips may save your life.

Take smoke detectors, for example.

Do you know you're twice as likely to die in a home fire if you don't have a working smoke alarm? Do you know you likely won't smell smoke from a fire if you are asleep? The majority of fire deaths are caused by smoke inhalation.

This section also offers a few activities for children to learn fire safety.

According to federal statistics, about 500 children ages 14 and younger die in a fire each year. And more than 50% of those younger than 5 die while asleep during a fire.

Turn to Page 7 and help your children learn about fire safety.



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# Maintain clothes dryers to help prevent fires

*Cheney Free Press*

CHENEY — Did you know that clothes dryers are often a source of house fires in the U.S.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, an average of 15,970 house fires annually begin in a washer or dryer.

In fact, the vast majority

92% of house fires involved a clothes dryer.

Dust, fiber and lint stuck in dryer vents can ignite due to the heat. Clothing can catch fire, too.

Dryer components can malfunction and ignite fires, as well.

Homeowners and renters who fail to clean lint filters and dryer vents are at a higher risk of

fires, however.

The National Fire Protection Association recommends the following dryer safety tips to help prevent fires:

- Have your dryer installed and serviced by a professional.
- Do not use the dryer without a lint filter. Clean the lint filter before and after each cycle.

- Do not forget to clean the back of the dryer where lint can build up.

- Check the venting system behind the dryer to make sure that it is not damaged, crushed or restricted.

- Make sure that the outdoor vent covering opens when the dryer is operating.

# Check your smoke detectors this week

*Cheney Free Press*

OLYMPIA – Smoke alarms are essential tools for detecting and alerting you to the presence of smoke. They can provide vital time for you and your loved ones to evacuate.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, nearly three-out-of-five residential fire deaths occur in homes with no working smoke alarms.

In 2023, there were 40 fire deaths in Washington State that occurred in places where smoke alarms should have been installed. Of these deaths, 82% were reported to have no smoke alarm present or it was unknown if a smoke alarm was present.

By ensuring that your smoke alarms are properly installed, regularly tested, and well-maintained, you can significantly increase your family's safety. The Washington State Fire Marshal's Office encour-



ages everyone to participate in Fire Prevention Week by checking and maintaining your smoke alarms, ensuring all alarms are working and replacing any that are outdated.

## Smoke alarm tips

- Ensure smoke alarms are installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement.

- Schedule a reminder to

test your alarms on the same day each month, such as the first or last day.

- Replace batteries at least once a year, or when the alarm chirps, indicating low battery power.

- Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years. Check the back of the alarm for the manufacture date. If your smoke alarms are over 10 years old, replace them promptly to ensure continued protection.

- If possible, consider upgrading to interconnected smoke alarms.



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# Expert tips on wildfire preparedness

By **Clare McGraw**

*Cheney Free Press*

CHENEY – As fall sets in, it's time to start thinking about wildfire preparedness.

Guy Gifford, Assistant Division Manager of the Community Resiliency and Prevention Department with the Department of Natural Resources, offers practical advice to help residents protect their home and land:

- **Consult a firefighter** —

One of the first steps homeowners can take is to get expert advice from a firefighter. “People can go to [wildfireready.com](http://wildfireready.com) and request a firefighter to come out, no cost,

walk the property, and give you one-on-one advice,” Gifford explained.

- **Take care of your trees**

—For those with forested properties, fall is the ideal time to thin and prune trees to reduce fire risk. “Fall is a great time to thin your pine trees,” said Gifford. “In the springtime, you can attract bark beetles. There are ways to prevent bark beetles, but it's easier in the fall and winter.”

- **Guard your home against embers** — A major threat to homes during wildfires is embers—tiny sparks carried by the

wind that can enter through small openings. Gifford warned, “The leading cause of wildfires causing people to lose their homes is embers.” He recommended winterizing homes by sealing windows and doors to keep both cold air and embers out. “Embers can come in just like cold air can.”

- **Prepare an evacuation plan** — Gifford emphasized the importance of having a solid evacuation plan. “Fall is a great time to plan your evacuation plans, and plans to evacuate your livestock,” he advised, noting that early planning can save lives during an emergency.

- **Be ready for power outages** — Power outages are a common consequence of wildfires, especially for those who rely on wells for water. Gifford pointed out that preparing now can benefit homeowners year-round. “Preparing during the winter will also help you during the summer,” he said. “A generator helps in many ways, not just for fire season but also for winter.”

By following these tips, homeowners can keep their homes and families safer this fall.



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# Cozy nights, safe fires: A guide to fireplace safety

By Rachel Bardwell

*Special to the Free Press*

CHENEY — Ever felt like your fireplace is a little too smoky? Or maybe your chimney's been playing host to a family of birds?

Fear not. Your local chimney sweep can be there to save the day, and your lungs.

Before lighting up your fireplace or wood-burning stove, be sure to take precautions for fire safety.

Here are some tips to help protect you and your home:

- **Use dry wood** — Damp wood can produce more smoke and creosote buildup, increasing the risk of a chimney fire. And be sure to use the right amount of firewood, as too much fuel can lead to excessive smoke and creosote buildup.

- **Clean your chimney** — A clean chimney helps prevent creosote buildup, a leading cause of chimney fires. A clean chimney means less smoke and fewer pollutants, which means you can

breathe easier and enjoy your fireplace without worrying about your health.

- **Inspect the flue** — Ensure there are no obstructions like birds' nests or debris.

In addition to protecting your home from an accidental chimney fire, these tips will help your family and pets.

But you have more to do:

- Always keep a window or door slightly open when using a fireplace. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that can be deadly.

- Install a carbon monoxide detector. Place one on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.

- Keep a safe distance: Teach children and pets to stay away from the fireplace and never leave a fire unattended.

- Use a fireplace screen: A screen can prevent sparks and embers from flying out.

If your not the do-it-your-

selfer, certified chimney sweeps can be your “chimney heroes.” They've battled soot dragons, outwitted creosote goblins, and even negotiated a peace treaty with a family of chimney swifts.

Ask your chimney sweep if they are certified by the Chimney Safety Institute of America. Certified sweeps and dryer vent technicians have undergone rigorous training and testing to ensure they have the knowledge and skills needed to properly inspect, clean, and maintain your equipment.

They are required to take continuing education classes to maintain certification, ensuring that your chimney is being cared for by a qualified professional who

prioritizes safety and efficiency.

In addition to cleaning your chimney, sweeps can provide valuable inspection services.

Annual inspections are recommended to identify any potential problems, such as cracks, leaks, or obstructions. They will assess the condition of your chimney and provide recommendations for repairs or maintenance.

An inspection will also help determine if you need a chimney cap, which helps prevent rain, snow and debris from entering your chimney, reducing the risk of damage and improving airflow.

And it goes without saying that if an inspection turns up damages, repair them.



Stay on the right side and keep the left side from happening.



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# Create a home fire escape plan for your family

By Daniel Anderson

*Special to the Cheney Free Press*

A home fire can turn dangerous in a matter of moments. Having a home escape plan can be a critical part of escaping safely.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, in a typical home fire, you may have as little as 2 minutes to safely escape from the time the smoke alarm sounds. In those moments, confusion and panic can set in. That's where an escape plan comes in. Having a plan in place that you've practiced can help minimize chaos so you can act quickly.

Every family needs to know exactly what to do and where to go in the event of a fire. Taking time to make a plan and practice it greatly increases the likelihood that everyone in the household is prepared, no matter what happens.

Here are steps to developing an effective home escape plan:

- **Make it a family affair** —

Gather together everyone in your household to make the plan. Do a walk-through of your home and find all possible exits and escape routes. When you're walking through your home, you should also check that doors and windows can be easily opened and that escape routes are clear of furniture and other obstructions.

- **Draw a map** — Sketch out the floor plan of your home and include all windows and doors. Mark escape routes in each

room. The NFPA recommends that you have at least two ways out of each room. Also, note where each smoke alarm is located.

- **Choose an outside meeting spot** — This will be where everyone plans on meeting after they've escaped. This can be a neighbor's house, a light pole, a mailbox, a tree—you decide what works best for your family. Just make sure it is a safe distance from your home.

- **Don't forget smoke alarms** — As part of your plan, install properly working smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside of common sleeping areas, and on every level of your home. Test your alarms monthly and replace your batteries twice a year.

- **Practice, practice, practice** — Rehearse fire drills at least twice a year. Try practicing during both daytime and nighttime to make sure everyone can escape quickly and safely under any circumstance.


- If you have children, teach them how to escape on their own in case you can't help them. Also teach children when and how to emergency dial on a cell phone and how to call 911. Review with them regularly.

- **Once you're out, stay out** — Never go back in a burning building and don't stop for belongings

on the way out. If someone is missing, let the emergency dispatcher know when you call from your safe meeting place.


With fire emergencies offering little time to react, a well-planned and well-rehearsed strat-

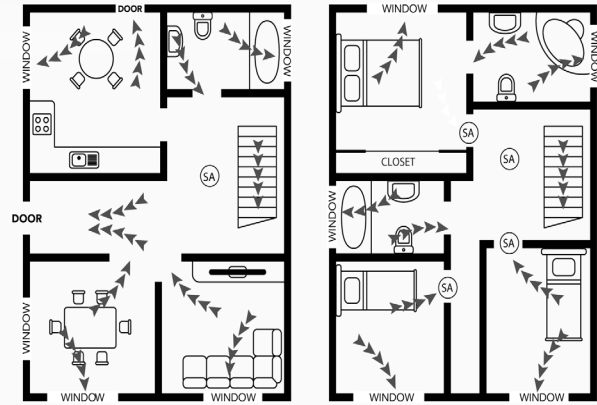
egy can be the difference between life and death. By taking these steps, you are not only protecting your household but also helping first responders focus on the emergency at hand.




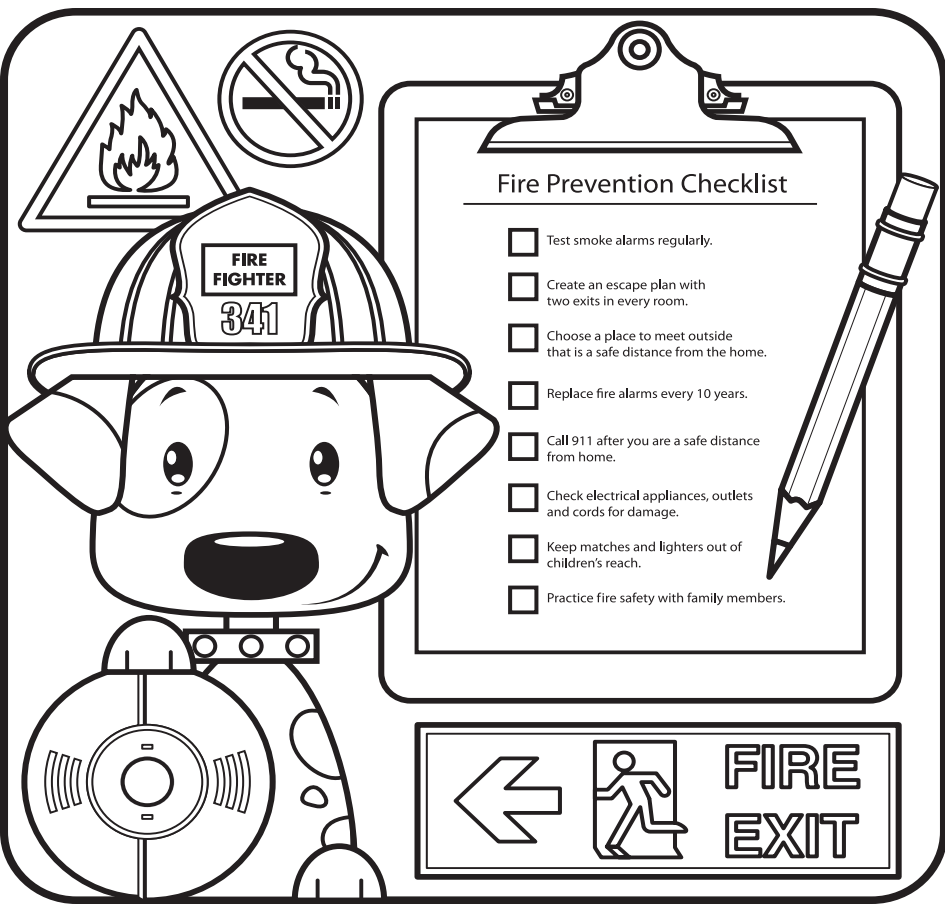
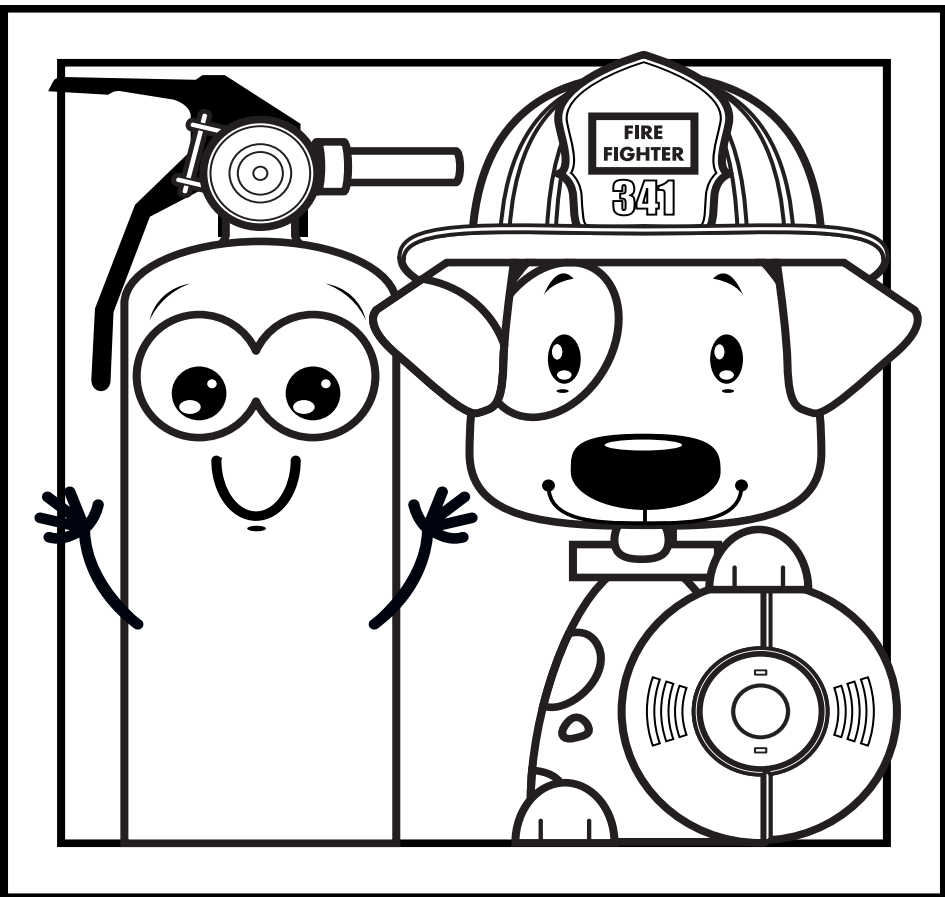
## HOW TO MAKE A HOME FIRE SAFETY PLAN

- Draw a map of your home. Show all doors and windows.
- Visit each room. Find two ways out.
- All windows and doors should open easily. You should be able to use them to get outside.
- Make sure your home has smoke alarms. Push the test button to make sure each alarm is working.
- Pick a meeting place outside. It should be in front of your home. Everyone will meet at the meeting place.
- Make sure your house or building number can be seen from the street.
- Talk about your plan with everyone in your home.
- Make sure everyone in your home knows how to dial 911 or your local emergency number.
- Practice your home fire drill!
- Make your own home fire escape plan using the grid provided.









# Fun stuff for kids!



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