

Macomb Township Fire Department

Fire Safety Tips

October 2008



John R. Chapin's rendering of the fire originally printed in *Harper's Weekly*; the view is northeast across the Randolph Street Bridge.

It was on Sunday, October 8 when the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 almost completely leveled the city. According to a popular legend, the fire was started when Mrs. Catherine O'Leary's cow tipped over a lantern. This barn fire quickly spread to adjoining structures and burned for 3 days.

Other theories of the cause of the fire

Daniel "Peg leg" Sullivan (who first reported the fire) ignited some hay while trying to steal milk.

Louis M. Cohen may have started the fire during a game of craps.

The fire was started by a meteor shower.



After the fire – The corner of Dearborn and Monroe Street, 1871.

Wooden buildings, strong winds and a delayed response to the fire led to the amount of destruction. Much needed changes in fire prevention practices came out of this conflagration. Most of the fire's damage was done on October 9th. Every year in the week that the 9th falls in is considered Fire Prevention Week.

Map of Chicago from 1871

The shaded area was destroyed by the fire. The area was still too hot for days following the fire to survey for damage. Later it was determined the fire engulfed an area of about 4 square miles. Gone were 17,500 buildings and \$222 million in property. Of the 300,000 residents, 90,000 were left homeless. After the fire, 125 bodies were found. The final estimate of life loss ranged from 200 – 300 people.



The Macomb Township Fire Department has chosen the month of October to focus on fire safety education. We visit or are visited by every elementary school within the Township. Fire safety programs are delivered by department members and the Macomb Township Fire Corps. We can use your help to make sure our messages touch every family. If you would like to receive training to help teach fire safety by joining our Fire Corps program, call (586) 286-0027.

We also have tailor-made fire safety programs for adults and older Americans. We are more than happy to schedule a day to teach your family, community group or office staff.

A home fire can be a devastating and tragic event – precious valuables damaged or gone forever, injuries and/or death. Even the smoke from a small fire can cause a family to be homeless. Our staff encourages you to call and invite us to come to your house to give you a home fire safety evaluation.

- Find and correct fire hazards in your home
- Get information on residential sprinkler systems
- Evaluate your home for proper smoke detector and fire extinguisher placement
- Develop a plan for escape



The National Fire Protection Association has a fantastic website filled with fire safety tips. Learn about *The Great American Fire Drill* and how Domino's Pizza is helping out by delivering fire safety messages with their pizza! Follow the link to their site.

<http://www.nfpa.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=1438&itemID=34420>

As always, if you have questions – please call (586) 286-0027. We are here to help.

Next Month: Heating Sources

References

The National Fire Protection Association. *Fire Prevention Week*. Retrieved September, 2008, from <http://www.nfpa.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=1438&itemID=34420>

Wikipedia. *1871 Great Chicago Fire*. Retrieved September, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1871_Great_Chicago_Fire

Macomb Township Fire Department *Safe from Fire Initiative*