

FEMA's New Newsletter Delivers Vital Messages to Key Fire Service and Code Officials

By Joe Beranek, president of Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association

A subgroup of the Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association (FEMA), the Government Relations Committee (GRC), addresses legislative and regulatory issues relating to commercial fire extinguishers and pre-engineered systems. The GRC's main goal is to educate officials by advancing a balanced fire safety philosophy that reflects the need for portable fire extinguishers along with other safety equipment within buildings. Both the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommend portable fire extinguishers as a part of a fire safety plan regardless of the presence of sprinklers. According to the NFPA, a balanced fire protection plan must not be based upon any single safeguard such as sprinklers. Additional safeguards should be provided for life safety in case any single safeguard is ineffective.

As a key component to the GRC's educational outreach efforts, the committee will publish a periodic newsletter to communicate with members of the fire service and code officials as to the importance of balanced fire safety and the role that special application fire extinguisher systems and portable extinguishers play. Each newsletter will feature success stories, as well as other industry-related articles, in an effort to educate about, encourage the use of, and place "front and center" the need for portable fire extinguishers and pre-engineered systems. FEMA invites distributors to share this information with their customers. A copy of the complete

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newsletter is available online at the FEMA website: www.femalifesafety.org. Below is a sample of success stories provided within the GRC newsletter.

Dorm Saved with Fire Extinguisher — *The Burlington Free Press*, Feb. 16, 2008

On Feb. 15, 2008, a female UVM student noticed smoke coming out of the trash room in her residential dorm. The student used a fire extinguisher to put out the fire. School officials immediately evacuated students from "E" building for approximately 90 minutes. The fire department inspected the building and after almost two hours signaled the okay for UVM students to re-enter. UVM police are investigating the incident as it looks like the fire was intentionally set.

Transportation Workers save Life with On-Board Fire Extinguisher — *New York Newsday*, Nov. 29, 2007

Quick thinking by two New York City Department of Transportation workers on Nov. 29, 2007, kept a stove fire in the

Marine Park section of Brooklyn from growing into something worse, city fire officials said. The two men saw several people run out of the smoking home, screaming about a fire. They quickly grabbed a fire extinguisher they keep in the truck and ran into a basement apartment. One put out the blaze while the other grabbed a 9-year-old boy who was in the apartment.

Historic Fort Saved by Fire Extinguishers

— *Syracuse Post/Standard*, Feb. 15, 2008

An alert employee helped keep an electrical fire from blazing out of control in the memorabilia shop of Fort Ontario, Oswego city firefighters said. Three employees were inside the building. It caught fire about 4:30 p.m., said Deputy Fire Chief Mark McManus. One used a fire extinguisher to contain the blaze until fire crews arrived. To protect the historic building, firefighters used two extinguishers to douse the blaze and fans to clear out the smoke, McManus said. The fire, smoke and water damage was contained to the shop and a storeroom. The fort is closed for the season. No injuries were reported, he said.

Courageous Rescue in Utah

— *The New American*, Jan. 21, 2008

Bob and Ann Turner left their home in Ogden, Utah, with their four-year-old granddaughter, Meleah, on a trip to purchase coal near the town of Huntington.

After topping off their truck's gas tank and loading their large trailer with coal, the



Turners headed home. The shortest route back took them on a steep road, with an eight percent grade.

Suddenly, Bob geared down, but the transmission would not hold the vehicle back. Bob drove off the road and up the side of the mountain. They came to a stop and glass and coal were strewn throughout the cab.

David Larsen of Ephraim saw the truck and trailer on the side of the mountain. He noticed gas leaking on the ground under the truck, so he unhooked the battery in an attempt to prevent a fire and then called authorities.

Two hunters, who had a fire extinguisher with them, happened along just as the car exploded with fire. Together they succeeded in temporarily extinguishing the fire and got Bob, Ann, and Meleah out of the wreckage. When the group was only part way down the mountain, the entire truck burst into flames.

A Case for Success Stories

Placing success stories "front and center" gives them the focus and attention they deserve. As many of these stories are not widely circulated, the benefit that portable extinguishers play in our everyday lives may not be fully realized. To help change that perception, FEMA feels strongly that these and other success stories need to be shared. We all know that portable fire extinguishers provide a first line of defense and are a valuable, life saving tool. It is time the industry "toots its own horn" and shares stories where portable fire extinguishers made a difference in people's lives.

We encourage you to download a copy of the inaugural issue of the newsletter. It contains excellent examples of portable extinguisher success stories, and sets the stage for ongoing strategy. ♦

To view future issues of the GRC newsletter or to review additional success stories, visit www.femalifesafety.org.

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