Autumn is Here!

…the temperature is falling, the leaves are changing, and the kids are gong back to school. This means its time to take a hike, rake the leaves, and buy the Halloween candy, all of which can present a variety of health and safety hazards. Because your organization is often called upon to respond when problems occur, you have an excellent opportunity to help educate members of your community about autumn/fall safety — and raise your department's profile in a very positive way.

Below and on the reverse side is a press release that outlines a variety of autumn safety tips. You can re–type it or download it in Word format at www.vfis.com and place it on your organizational letterhead. You may also wish to add your own tips specific to your community. Simply insert your information in the areas indicated, and mail the news release to the health writer or feature editor at your local newspapers. Better yet, call the paper to find out who is the most appropriate person to receive the release.

Contact:
Assistant Chief Craig Best
513-688-8400

Anderson Township Fire Department

Offers Autumn Safety Tips for the Anderson Township Community

With autumn fast approaching, more and more people in the Anderson Township area will be enjoying the change of the leaves and the cooler temperature. Unfortunately, some autumn–related weather activities such as hiking and camping, turning the furnace back on, cleaning the chimney, and trick-or-treating do present their share of hazards. To help ensure everyone in the community enjoys a safe autumn, the members of ATFD offer the following tips and suggest you post them where they are likely to be seen by your family members and co-workers.

CHIMNEYS AND FURNACES

Chimney maintenance is vital to your family's safety.

- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned on a regular basis.
- When possible, burn seasoned woods (dryness of the wood is more important than hard wood versus soft wood).
- Smaller, hotter fires will burn more completely and produce less smoke than larger fires.
- Do not burn cardboard boxes or trash, as they can spark a chimney fire.
- Install stovepipe thermometers, which help monitor flue temperatures where wood stoves are in use, then adjust burning practices as needed.

TRICK-OR-TREAT SAFETY

Don't get caught up in the holiday spirit — make sure your children trick-or-treat safely.

- Rather than buying a mask, use makeup to decorate children. That way, they can see more easily.
- If your kids go trick-or-treating after dusk, make sure they have a flashlight and are wearing retro reflective material. Dress children in warm, light colored clothing so that they may be easily seen when crossing the street.
- Do not purchase Halloween costumes and other items which are not marked "Flameproof" or "Flame-Retardant".
- Remind children to skip houses that are not well-lit.
- Check candy before allowing kids to eat it.
- Avoid tricks that could cause bodily injury, destroy property, or cause a fire.

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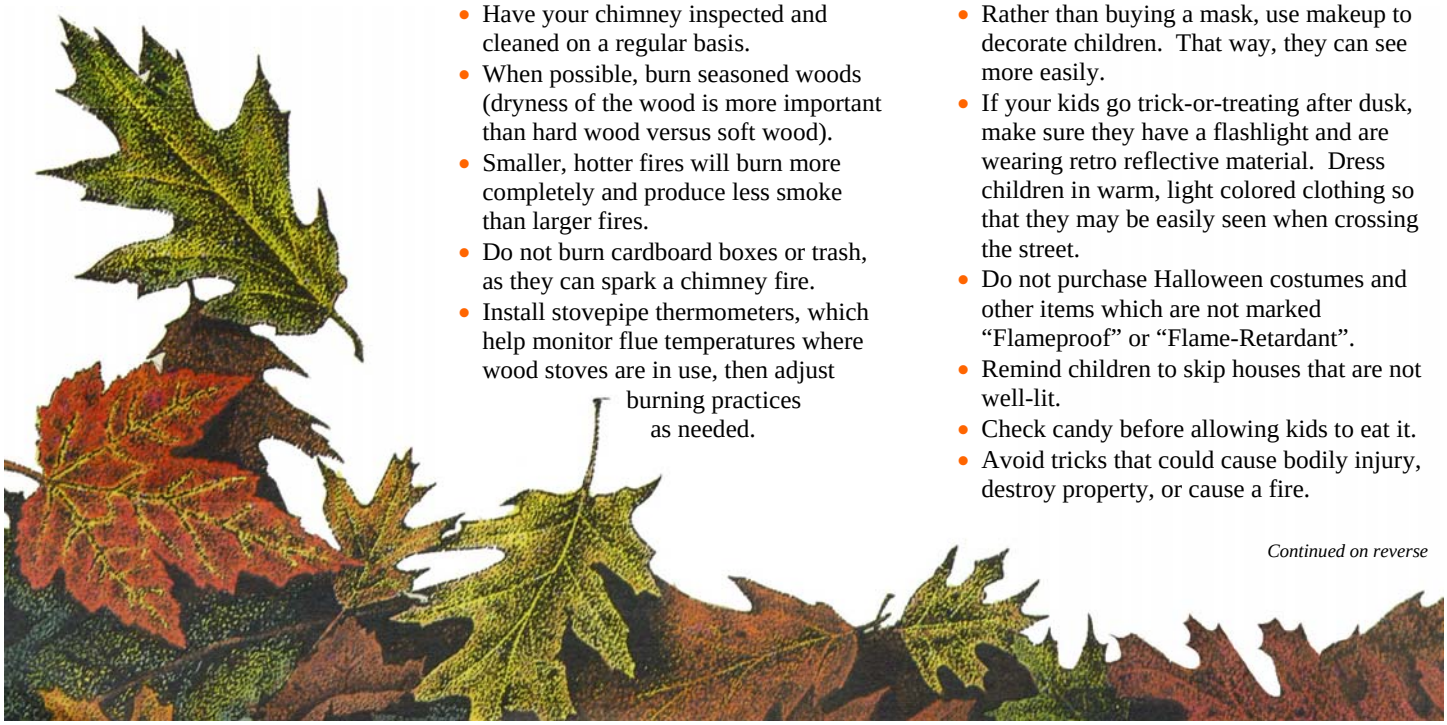

Press Release: Autumn Safety Tips, continued

HIKING AND PICNICS/CAMPING

As you take in the fall's beautiful scenery, think ahead, be prepared, and stay safe.

- Check the weather forecast before heading outdoors for a hike. It is not safe to hike when thunderstorms or heavy snowfall is expected.
- Carry drinking water. Don't drink from streams, springs, or lakes without first properly treating the water.
- Observe wildlife from a safe distance. Don't try and get too close to wild animals.
- Stay on the trail — if you leave it, you may get lost.
- To help prevent food poisoning, keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Don't store perishable foods in a hot car.
- Clean all surfaces and utensils that come into contact with raw meat or meat juices before re-using them.
- Wash hands frequently when preparing food, and before serving and eating.
- Keep kids away from grills and lighter fluid, and keep grills away from anything that can burn them.
- Be aware of tiny deer ticks that carry Lyme disease and know which symptoms to watch out for. When in a potentially infested area, apply insect repellant, wear light-colored, long sleeved-shirts, pants, and socks.
- Do not build a fire near tree trunks, fallen trees, or over hanging branches.
- When extinguishing a campfire, let it die down, then break up the coals or logs, spread the pieces, soak them with water, and then cover the area with dirt or sand.

BACK TO SCHOOL SAFETY

Parents must do some homework to keep their kids healthy and safe. Don't let safety "fall" by the wayside.

- Walk and ride to school safely. Obey traffic lights and signals, walk only in crosswalks, and listen to the crossing guard.
- If your kids bike to school, be sure they wear a helmet.
- If possible, always walk your child to the bus stop and pick them up as well.
- Keep backpacks light — a child's backpack should only be 5 to 10 percent of his or her body weight, according to the American Chiropractic Association.
- A backpack with wheels is easy to maneuver and reduces back stress. If your child does choose to wear a backpack, utilize both straps. Slinging the backpack over one shoulder may cause spinal curvature.

PET SAFETY

Watch out for family pets as you prepare for the cold, festive days of fall.

- Many brands of antifreeze are highly toxic. Store new and used antifreeze in a sealed container.
- Chocolate is a special treat for nearly all humans during Halloween and Thanksgiving, but it is toxic to dogs, cats, and birds.
- Holiday meals can be hazardous to pets. Chicken and turkey bones can get stuck and pierce the digestive tract. Rich foods can cause pancreatitis or bloating.
- Indoor pets not acclimated to winter temperatures should not be outside in cold weather for long periods. Outdoor pets can withstand fairly cold temperatures, but make sure they have proper shelter from wind and rain, and provide them with good bedding. Frostbite is a winter hazard to pets.

Most important of all, remember to call 911 in the event of an emergency.

FALL CLEANUP

Yard work does not end simply because summer is over. Here are some safety tips for tackling autumn tasks around your home.

- When lifting heavy bags of mulch, use a wheelbarrow when possible, and remember to lift with your legs, not with your back.
- Be careful when pruning. Pruning from a ladder is especially dangerous.
- To avoid blisters when doing yard work, wear gloves.
- If you are doing a lot of raking, try an ergonomic rake, which can be found at most hardware stores and garden centers.