

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: 10/10/05

Date Prepared: 10/05/05

Reviewed by: _____

Subject: Fire Prevention Week.

Report By: Battalion Chief Brian J. Crudo,
Fire Prevention & Disaster Preparedness Officer

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Proclaim the week of October 9-15, 2005, as Fire Prevention Week in the City of Albany.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

This year, the National Fire Protection Association the campaign slogan is, "**Use Candles with Care: When You Go Out, Blow Out!**" This week coincides with the anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The City of Albany seeks to heighten public awareness of fire prevention all year long, but also wishes to use this week as an opportunity to encourage all Albany residents to think about, and take action, regarding fire prevention.

Candles can lift our spirits, yet they can easily result in disaster

All too often, fatal fires caused by candles make headlines. In Massachusetts not long ago, two children died after a candle ignited a plastic bathtub. During Hurricane Floyd, two Maryland boys died after a child dropped a lit candle on his bed. In Pennsylvania, unlawful tenants using a candle started a fire that killed four people.

In 2001, home candle fires killed 190 people and caused more than a quarter million dollars in property damage in the U.S., according to the latest data from the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). That data also show that candles started more reported home fires in 2001 than at any point since 1980, the first year of available data.

Tragedies like these happen every day, and Albany, California is no exception.

This loss of life and property is staggering, but there is much that you can do to protect yourself and your loved ones. That's why I'm writing this article. As your fire chief, I want you to recognize this danger and learn the ways you can prevent a candle fire in your home.

Used safely, candles can fill our homes with fragrance and create a calming and welcome mood. They add glow to the holidays and are an important part of religious observances. But what you may not realize is how easily a fire can start when a candle is left unattended or left burning while someone sleeps.

Like a lit cigarette or a pan on a stove, a burning candle without human supervision is a disaster waiting to happen.

Why are we seeing so many candle fires? Well for one thing, the popularity of candles is soaring. Americans are buying \$2 billion worth of candles every year, and you can now find candles in 7 out of 10 households across the country. A typical manufacturer offers between 1,000 and 2,000 specific varieties of candles!

The most important thing to remember here in Albany, California is that you can make sure candles are used safely in your home. If you use candles in your home, follow this safety advice:

- Place candles on stable furniture, in sturdy holders that will catch dripping wax.
- Never leave a candle unattended.
- If the power goes out, use flashlights for illumination, not candles.
- Keep candles away from all things that can catch fire.
- Place candles on higher furniture, where they won't be knocked over by children or pets.
- Never place lit candles in windows, where they could ignite blinds or curtains.
- Don't allow children or teens to have candles in their bedrooms.
- Ask questions about the candles and candleholders you buy. There are new standards that major suppliers will follow, to make sure the candles and candleholders won't break, tip over, or otherwise malfunction in ordinary use.

Extinguish candles carefully, using a long-handled candlesnuffer or a soft, directed breath. Be careful not to splatter wax when extinguishing.

Our department is joining forces with NFPA during Fire Prevention Week "Use Candles With Care - When you go out, blow out!" October 9-15, 2005 to raise awareness of important causes of home fires and the steps people can take to avoid them. Candle safety is one of our top fire safety priorities here in Albany, during Fire Prevention Week and all year long.

If you use candles in your home, please "candle with care."

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Minimal; approximately \$3,000 will be spent on photocopying material and manpower in conjunction with Fire Prevention Week. This money is already allocated from the Fire Department's Public Education budget.