

Fire safety campaign focuses on awareness

IMCOM News Service

Fire safety campaign focuses on awareness, inspections

Two firefighters are engulfed in smoke as they battle a blaze in a construction dumpster on Fort Pickett, Va., Feb. 15, 2009. Increased fire prevention awareness is the goal of a campaign launched March 31 throughout the Installation Management Command. Photo by Staff Sgt. Tracy Hohmanl.



April 6, 2009 - Increased fire prevention

awareness is the goal of a campaign launched March 31 throughout the Installation Management Command. Campaign actions include promoting fire safety and increased inspections. The campaign extends through national Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 4-10, and concludes Oct. 31.

"We've seen a disturbing increase in the number of fires," said John B. Nерger, executive director of the Installation Management Command. "During the first six months of fiscal year 2009, IMCOM garrisons experienced more than 130 fire-related incidents that resulted in one death, 14 injuries and more than \$13.6 million in property damage. All fires were preventable. We must take aggressive action."

Garrison Safety and Fire and Emergency Services personnel will team up on the commandwide fire safety campaign to raise awareness and provide guidance to Soldiers and Families on how to recognize, improve and practice fire safety.

"We want to increase awareness of fire dangers and encourage all Soldiers, Family members, and civilian employees to practice fire safety, said Mario Owens, IMCOM Safety Office director. "Fires and burns are the third leading cause of unintentional home injuries and deaths according to the Home Safety Council. During this fire safety campaign, Safety will team with Fire and Emergency Services in conducting joint inspections to identify possible fire sources."

Major causes of fires were malfunctioning electrical devices, misuse of space heaters and unattended cooking. Mishandling of flammables, candles and smoking materials also caused many fires, said Rocky Cook, chief of Fire and Emergency Services for IMCOM.

"These fires could have been prevented," Cook said. "Unattended cooking and burning candles caused half of the fires on Army installations in 2008. Fires have displaced Families, disrupted the mission and, tragically, taken several Family members' lives and one active-duty Soldier's life."

Education is essential to reducing fires on Army installations, Owens said. Safety officials will target where people work and live with awareness programs on hazard identification and elimination, safety demonstrations, and reporting and evacuation procedures. Fire safety information is available on the IMCOM Web page (www.imcom.army.mil) under the fire prevention heading.

"Safety personnel will aggressively communicate fire prevention information, tips and lessons learned. Soldiers, civilians and Family members need to know how to practice fire safety and what to do when there is a fire," Owens said.

Everyone should be trained to perform a fire safety inspection and recognize faulty fire safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers, Cook said. Fire and Emergency Services personnel will inspect and test smoke and fire detection equipment in all facilities on IMCOM installations as part of the fire safety campaign. There is strong emphasis on testing, preventive maintenance inspections and ensuring installed fire detection and suppression systems are adequate, he said.

"We also want people to know what to do when there is a fire. Fire and Emergency Services will introduce fire drills and ensure you know how to report a fire. Many people don't know what to do when there is a fire. The sooner a fire is reported, the sooner the fire fighters can douse the blaze," Cook said.

Fire Prevention Week is Oct. 4-10, but Owens said fire safety must be practiced every day.

"Soldiers, civilians and Family members are all valuable to the Army, which compels us to continue to promote fire prevention even beyond the end of the campaign," he said.