

July 30, 2012

News Release

For Immediate Release

Careless smoking causes 10 fires in Springfield in 2012

An apartment fire July 13 on Marion St. marks the tenth fire caused by careless smoking in Springfield since the beginning of the year. So far this year, nearly \$3 million in property has been lost at the hands of careless smokers and nearly 3/4 of those were due to improper disposal of a cigarette on a balcony or patio. Also alarmingly, the percent of fires caused by careless smoking in Springfield since 2009 is four times the national average.

With that in mind, the Springfield Fire Department is partnering with the Greater Springfield Apartment & Housing Association to bring awareness to this important issue. Firefighters and members of the Greater Springfield Apartment & Housing Association remind you to follow these tips if you do choose to smoke in your apartment:

- Use a sturdy ashtray or can filled with sand to collect ashes. Do not use a flammable container such as Tupperware and never use a potted plant. Potting soil contains combustible materials.
- Ashtrays should be set on something sturdy and hard to ignite, like a table.
- Put it out. The cigarette really needs to be completely stubbed out in the ashtray.
- Do not let cigarette butts pile up on top of one another. Empty your ashtray often by first soaking the cigarette butts in water. NEVER toss hot cigarette butts or ashes in the trash.
- If you are drowsy, put it out. Fires caused by cigarettes often start on or next to the victim – in bed, on a sofa or in the trash.
- Check to make sure your smoke alarms are in good working order.

In the next few months, the Springfield Fire Department and members of the Greater Springfield Apartment & Housing Association will begin distributing door hangers at area apartment buildings, reminding tenants of these important tips.

For media only:

For more information, contact: Fire and Life Safety Educator Cara Restelli Erwin, (417) 864-1699 or Jean Harmison with the Greater Springfield Apartment & Housing Association at (417) 883-4942.