

COLUMNS

Take care with fires and burning

Fuel. And I'm not talking about the high price of gas. I'm talking about the arch enemy of firefighters everywhere.

That sinister flammable stuff that burns.

Oh yeah, that's a little redundant, but you know what I mean.

Grass. Fallen leaves. Underbrush.

Fire chiefs all over East Texas are concerned about fuel particularly this year because we had a wet and warm summer and fall.

Normally that is a good thing because it meant fewer grass fires last summer.

Unfortunately, without more rain, now we are a little under-watered and overgrown. Bad news for burning.

Keith Newburn, Chief of the Bullard VFD, sent me these suggestions for preventing grass fires.

■ When burning trash: "Many homeowners in more rural areas burn their household trash, with burning conditions getting as extreme as they are now it is terribly important for them to remember to use some type of cover over their burn barrel to prevent sparks and embers from coming out of the barrel and spreading fire," according to Keith.

■ When welding: "This time of year, many farmers and ranchers take this time to do welding and fence repair around the property, it's extremely important that they keep some type of fire lookout and a means of extinguishing of any fire before it gets a good start.

All it takes is one small spark to set the country-side on fire," he adds.

Unfortunately, it seems we can't escape the reality of house fires, either.

Kyle Stephenson, of the Whitehouse VFD, offered these ways to keep safe.

■ Don't go to bed with the fireplace still burning. If you have a screen in front of your fireplace, install glass doors.

Then, when its bedtime, close the doors to suffocate the fire before you turn in.

■ Check all your candles; don't forget that they might be burning still.

■ Unplug your appliances.

CATHY KRAFVE

Checklist Charlie



■ Replace old appliances, like curling irons, with the new ones that have automatic shut-offs, in case you forget to unplug.

■ Always turn off space heaters at night.

■ Make a habit of removing skillet from the stove top.

Don't leave cast iron pots on the burner, even when the burner is turned off, because one day you will accidentally forget to turn it off.

Kyle is also a paramedic stationed in Chandler, so he commented that he's seen an increase in road collisions because of cell phones.

Of course, when the weather conditions are bad this time of year, we all know to slow down. Right?

Okay, maybe some of us tend to forget, so you read it here.

Slow down.

"And let me leave you with this last thought," says Newburn, "if a fire started on your property, by you or someone under your direction, gets away and does damage to any near by property, you can be held financially liable for those damages as well the cost of putting the fire out if there is any."

Not to mention putting our volunteer firefighters in harm's way.

Can I get an "Amen!" from all the firefighters -- and their families -- reading the paper today?

Thanks to everyone who offered their expertise in today's column.

I don't want to read about any of my readers in the newspaper -- at least, not in a bad way.

I only like seeing my East Texas neighbors in the paper when it's good news.

So, take care.

■ Cathy Primer Krafve, aka Checklist Charlie, lives in beautiful East Texas with her family.

She welcomes all comments, and especially lists, at CaeKrafve2@aol.com.

FIVE-STAR FIESTA



Above, teacher Kameron Aycock, Katelyn Dacus, Kip Picarella, Jennifer Martinez, Curtis Dean, Jessica Johnson and Luke Baker join other Spanish students in class who culminated a lesson with a buffet featuring foods from various Spanish-speaking countries. Below, Sarah Cooper and Sarah Blair enjoy the fruits of their labor.

On Feb. 4 The Brook Hill School dining room could well have been mistaken for a 5-star international restaurant as it played host to Señora Aycock's Spanish 3 juniors and their fiesta.

The students had been studying commands in Spanish and to demonstrate their proficiency, they each made recipe cards inspired by foods traditional to at least one of the 21 Spanish-speaking countries around the globe.

Each student brought a sample of their recipe contributing to the international buffet.

While many of the recipes were traditional to Mexico, several students brought food representing other Spanish-speaking countries including Spain, Nicaragua, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Bolivia.



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EAST TEXAS WILL BE PART OF THE SHOW!



this morning



Bryan Houston Meghan McDermott Scott Fossey

WEEKDAYS 5:30am