



FD12

WE'RE HERE FOR LIFE.

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FD12

FROM THE CHIEF



We've started off the year with a positive attitude and a continuing sense of service, and we hope you have, too. Unfortunately, while we work hard at community outreach and fire prevention, we also have to focus on some unfortunate events.

Already this year, three people have been arrested for arson in Fire District 12 alone. One investigation took six months to complete before we were able to assist the State Fire Marshal in apprehending an alleged arsonist who had done damage to his own home and collected an insurance check. Then, in January, two men allegedly burned down a vacant home on Lee Road. That case was resolved quickly with the help of the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office.

To be honest, several other fires this year have some of the hallmarks of arson, and those are under investigation, too. So far, no civilians have been injured, but one of our firefighters did sustain a burn while battling an arson fire earlier this year. This is a serious problem and a very serious crime, and we have to keep our guard up.

We rely on you heavily for information about suspicious fires. Rare is the arsonist who keeps his or her crimes quiet. They have to tell somebody, or their behavior makes them suspicious. In such cases, it's vitally important that you call us or local law enforcement. First and foremost, fires are

dangerous. But beyond that, they drive up insurance costs and endanger the lives of first responders. Be vigilant, be honorable, be aware.

Like you, we're looking forward to the warmer weather that arrives this time of year. We're also asking you to be extra cautious when adapting to the sports and yard work that accompany the onset of springtime. Drink lots of water, pace yourself, don't take chances, and don't be afraid to slow down if you're having trouble.

Finally, I want to remind you again that we are here for you all the time – and not just for emergencies. If you need help installing a smoke detector or changing batteries, we'll do that. If you want to bring your Girl Scout or Boy Scout troop to one of our stations for a tour – or even if you just want to bring your own family – we're more than happy to show you around. And if you want us to come to you – to check for fire hazards at your home or office, or to make a presentation at your homeowners group or church, we're always glad to help.

Keeping you informed is part of keeping you safe. Just say the word and we'll open our doors to you. Like our motto says, We're Here for Life.

HIGH-PROFILE ARSONS HIGHLIGHT PROBLEM

Since Jan. 1, three local men have been arrested for two arson fires set in Fire District 12. One of the fires occurred last July and it wasn't until January that sufficient evidence had been gathered for the State Fire Marshal to make the arrest. The second fire, allegedly set by two men, occurred in January; the arrest came a few weeks later.

Both incidents were shocking to many, but when you consider that there were two arson fires, six months apart, in FD12 alone – and that there are more than a dozen fire districts in St. Tammany – it makes you wonder how many other structure fires have been intentional. That's alarming.

When FD12 personnel respond to a structure fire, we can usually detect evidence of arson fairly easily. Linking that evidence conclusively to a person or persons and a motive is rarely that easy.

WE DON'T APPROACH EVERY FIRE SCENE THINKING IT IS ARSON, BUT WE DO WORK HARD TO FIND THE CAUSES OF EVERY FIRE WE BATTLE.

It takes collaboration between the Fire Marshal, Sheriff's Office and sometimes the State Police Crime Lab to make a case. Often, it takes the help of the media, too, in enlisting your input.

The citizens we serve and protect are a vital link in keeping our community safe. You are the eyes and ears of public safety, and we rely on you to report accidents, smoke, visible flames – and dangerous or suspicious behavior. If you have a reasonable suspicion that a fire was intentionally set – whether to a structure, woods or even dry grass – please call us or call the Sheriff's Office. We don't approach every fire scene thinking it is arson, but we do work hard to find the causes of every fire we battle.

Arsons endanger lives – yours and ours – and property, and can cause insurance rates to rise. They impact all of us. You can help by being aware of the problem and by being alert to unusual or suspicious behavior. With information about fires or with any questions, don't hesitate to call us at 985.892.5161. No matter what your question or concern, we're here for you.

SPRINGTIME BRINGS A NEW SET OF HAZARDS

It may not feel like springtime every day yet, but we are officially at the start of the warmer season. As we remind you every year, nicer weather means different kinds of activities for you and your family – and different kinds of hazards, too.

You know how your body adapts to different temperatures in different seasons, and that what feels warm now will seem cool by August? Keep that in mind when you undertaken outdoor recreation or home improvement products. If you were to reshingle your roof in the summer months, you'd welcome 75 degrees; if you're doing it now, chances are your body isn't yet adjusted to "normal" temperatures, and you can still overheat. The same is true of outdoor athletics. If you're like most people, you're not a year-round athlete but you might enjoy long bike rides or jogs on the Tammany Trace

PUTTING SAFETY FIRST ISN'T JUST ABOUT KEEPING FIRE EXTINGUISHERS HANDY AND YOUR SMOKE DETECTOR BATTERIES FRESH; IT'S ABOUT YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH, TOO.

or in your neighborhood when the weather is nice. Be careful! You're probably out of practice. And while riding a bicycle is... you know... like riding a bicycle – something you never forget – you can still be a little unsteady on your wheels at first. We want you to avoid injuries, so play safe and work safe. Wear appropriate protective gear for both sport and labor. Don't overdo it your first time out of the gate. And, as always, stay hydrated.

Most of our 211 calls are for medical emergencies. While we're always here for you when you need us, we'd rather not meet under those circumstances. Putting safety first isn't just about keeping fire extinguishers handy and your smoke detector batteries fresh; it's about your physical health, too.



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FD12 SUPPORTS SUICIDE PREVENTION EFFORT

Fire District 12 is working with other Northshore agencies to help reduce the number of suicides in St. Tammany Parish. In an average year, FD12 personnel respond to more than 75 suicides or attempts—and we are only one fire districts in the parish, so the total parish-wide is much higher. We want that to change.

"St. Tammany has one of the highest suicide rates in Louisiana, and our community is working to change that," said Deputy Chief Stephen Krentel. "As part of the St. Tammany Parish Suicide Prevention Support Program, we hope to do just that."

The Suicide Prevention Support Program includes the United Way and Volunteers of America, which provide the 211 hotline. A free call to 211 connects the caller to needed support services, including

counselors trained in crisis intervention. Anyone can call, whether in a crisis yourself or to discuss intervention options for a friend who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts or actions.

The 211 service is not a substitute for 911, however, which citizens should use in any emergency situation – including a suicide attempt or immediate threat.

"Every suicide or attempt affects many people," said FD12 Chief Darrell Guilott. "Families, friends, coworkers and even emergency responders bear an emotional toll from each lost life."

At the program's website, www.ItsOKToTalkAboutIt.org, citizens can find resources, info, and messages of hope.

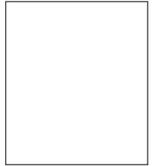
"We're proud to be part of this effort," Guilott said. "We hope you'll join us in spreading the word."



FD12.org



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<http://www.facebook.com/STFD12>

Did You Know...



The men and women of FD12 don't have to wait for an emergency to visit you. We will gladly install smoke detectors or change batteries for you, or give you a free home safety inspection. We will also provide programs for your homeowners association, scouting group, church or other civic organization, and offer tours of our fire stations to any interested family or group.

SCHEDULE A HOME VISIT OR PROGRAM:

CALL 985.892.5161 OR CONTACT US ONLINE AT www.FD12.org

FD12.org

