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Firefighters Take Training On the Road to Elementary Schools

The Oak Park Fire Department is taking its demonstration trailer on a two-week road trip to 15 elementary schools throughout the Village, giving second graders hands-on training in fire safety.

By the end of school day on May 16, the Fire Department will have visited all eight District 97 elementary schools, as well as six parochial schools and one private school – meeting with 35 classes in all.

"Children are capable of grasping safety instructions at a fairly young age," said Oak Park Fire Chief William Bell. "But the more hands-on the instructions, the more involved they become and the more they remember. Our safety trailer lets them really get involved in the training and learn through demonstrations instead of lectures."

The trailer is set up to simulate situations the students may encounter in their own homes. Training is divided into three areas – household hazards, what to do when there is a fire and how to call for emergency help.

Household hazards demonstrations include leaving flammable items too close to a hot stove or using electrical appliances near water sources. Students also are taught how to recognize a smoke alarm and what to do if they hear it in the middle of the night.

Teaching students what do if they are in a fire includes a review of *stop, drop and roll*, reinforcing the lesson taught to them as first graders. Students also learn about crawling under smoke and how a purposefully lit fire can turn into something unexpected if people are careless and don't respect a fire's potential risk.

The final session is on using the telephone to dial 9-1-1 in an emergency. Students call 9-1-1 from the trailer and are connected to a firefighter who responds just as a dispatcher would in a real emergency. This exercise is intended to give students a sense of what to expect if they should ever have to call 9-1-1 in a real emergency. They also are taught how to dial 9-1-1 from both rotary and cell phones.

For more information on fire safety or the mobile trailer, call 445.3300 or email fire@oak-park.us.

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