## Farm inspection can help prevent fires

NEWARK, Del. — Fire serves us in many ways, but we must always respect its potential to destroy. Whenever we relax our viligance — by smoking in bed, letting electrical wiring deteriorate, failing to maintain a heating system, or handling flammables carelessly — we court disaster, says University of Delawarae extension safety specialist Ronald C. Jester.

Fires in the U.S. take a tremendous toll. Property losses amount to \$6.7 billion each year,

and about 6,700 lives are lost. Farm fires cost over \$300 million annually and account for scores of fatalities and injuries.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, the most frequent causes of building fires are: electrical, careless smoking, heating and cooking equipment, children and matches, open flames and sparks, flammable liquids, arson, chimneys and flues, lightning and spontaneous ignition.

To prevent fires, Jester recommends inspecting your home

or farm with the following safety

tips in mind:

\* Don't overload circuits. Dimmed lights, reduced output from heaters, or a poor TV picture are symptoms.

\* If a fuse blows or circuit breaker trips repeatedly with normal use, check for shorts and other defects.

\* Never overfuse a circuit. Keep plenty of fuses of the correct size near the fuse box. Install tamperresistant fuses to prevent accidental or intentional overfusing.

\* Use extension cords heavy enough for the required wattage. Use grounded extensions for three-prong equipment.

 Before each use, note condition of cords on power tools, sweepers, heaters, and other devices which are moved about and/or frequently plugged and unplugged.

\* Keep area around motors and heaters free of flammable or combustible materials. Provide plenty of ventilation for motors, and keep them clean.

\* Protect light bulbs with wire guards if there is danger of breakage. Cover bulbs near combustibles with globes to block heat.

\* Don't smoke near combustibles, or when refueling or handlign flammable or explosive materials.

\* Don't accumulate papers, rags or trash around stoves, furnaces or gas water heaters.

\* Above-ground gasoline storage tanks should be 40 feet or more from buildings. Tanks near burning buildings can explode and spread fire. Underground tanks, pumps, and vents should be outside.

\*Store small quantities of gasoline and other flammable fuels in "approved" red metal containers that are sturdy and clearly marked. They should have spring-closing lids and/or spout covers. NEver use breakable

containers.

\* Don't use gasoline, benzene, naptha, or other flammable fuels as cleaning or degreasing agents. Other products work as well with far less hazard.

\* Refuel farm equipment with care. No smoking ever!

\* Watch for and repair leaks in fuel lines, carburetors, pumps and filters.

\* Burn trash well away from buildings. Carefully manage fires when burning off land. Don't burn on windy days.

Jester says it's important to be prepared for a fire. Equip your home, buildings and vehicles with fire extinguishers. Have a good water supply such as a farm pond. A fire detection and alarm system is a worthwhile investment. Devise and practice a home fire escape plan. Instruct all family members and employees on what to do and how to call for help in case of fire.



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