

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

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### **Get Out and Stay Out!**

A local fire department was bustling on a recent Saturday, and the busy day had nothing to do with emergencies of any sort. It was the department's annual open house for children, a perfect fall day for hands-on activity at the station. Most children seem to want to grow up to be firefighters, and Saturday's activities probably added to their numbers.

The engine doors were open for inspection; the horns for sounding their warnings. The full range of firefighter gear was on display from slickers to the full body protection hazard material suiting. The kids had a blast, and adults like me came away with a new appreciation for the extent of the service these provide for all of us.

The new national fire safety slogan is "Get out! Stay out!" Prominently displayed at the open house, it delivers its message better than any advice I have ever heard. Combined with the open house activities, repetition of that slogan teaches the important lesson to stay away from a burning dwelling. It truly adds a measure of safety for emergency situations.

The children had hands-on experiences that built on the traditional Fire Prevention Week lessons taught by firefighters in classrooms. Activity stations demonstrated safety lessons. A soft floor mat let the kids fall to the ground to "Stop, Drop and Roll." A large rubber tube let them practice crawling to safety under the level of dangerous smoke.

A model home housed in the department's safety trailer reinforced lessons of household safety, and a tour of the "house" was topped off with the release of artificial smoke that hung a few feet off the floor. The children then used their new knowledge to crawl under the smoke to escape the fumes – to Get out and Stay out!

Child-sized helmets and activity books sent the young visitors home with physical reminders of their day at the fire station. Their parents went away with their own lessons.

An all-important lesson for each of us is that smoke detectors save lives, but only if they are properly wired with active batteries. On Saturday, fire officials were advising parents to replace detector batteries as part of the autumn routine of changing clocks back to standard time. The battery check of my home's smoke detectors showed that one detector had no power at all. Each battery has now been replaced and each alarm retested with the new battery.

Fire Prevention Week has now passed for another year, but its lessons are always timely. Our children have had their refresher course in fire safety. If you would like a personal refresher, call me, 567-1661, check with the fire department or log on to [nfpa.org](http://nfpa.org), the website of the National Fire Protection Association. And remember that the advice we gave to children applies to all of us in a fire emergency: Get out! Stay out!