

Misuse of heating units causes more large-scale fires in city

By Chad Lorenz
Senior Reporter

The Lincoln Fire Department has been busy this winter because some larger fires have brought more firefighters to the scene than usual.

Charlie Beachamp, chief of the Bureau of Fire Prevention, said the department had responded to a higher number of large-scale fires.

"It seems to me they have been more devastating," he said.

In the past, losses have averaged about \$2 million for the entire year, Beachamp said. Lincoln fires claimed \$9 million in damage in 1995, a considerably high amount, Beachamp said.

Losses in the first two months of 1996 may make it a record year too, he said.

The two biggest fires in Lincoln so far this year — the fires at the University of Nebraska presidential residence and at the Family Dollar Store — have brought a total loss of \$1.5 million.

"We've got some high dollar losses for the beginning of the year," Beachamp said.

The university's presidential residence, 5930 Norman Road, burned down Jan. 18, causing \$500,000 in structural damage and \$200,000 damage to contents. Investigators determined that an electric heater caused the blaze.

"It seems to me they (the fires) have been more devastating."

CHARLIE BEACHAMP

chief of the Bureau of Fire Prevention

The Family Dollar Store, 2541 N. 11th St., was gutted by fire Feb. 2, causing \$400,000 damage to the building and \$400,000 contents damage. A fluorescent light fixture ignited a pile of clothes beneath it to start the fire.

Beachamp said he wasn't sure exactly how many fires the department had responded to in January and February.

During Lincoln's cold spell in those months, more fires were started because of misuse of heating devices, Beachamp said.

Fires caused by wood-burning stoves started when stoves burned for days at a time and heated up combustible material around them, he said.

Chimney pipes on the stoves that are the wrong size or improperly insulated radiate heat around the ceiling and walls until they ignite, he said.

Electric heaters and space heaters kept on for an unusual amount of time also can ignite nearby combustibles,

Beachamp said. Such appliances should be kept 36 inches from anything that could burn.

The extension cords plugged into those heaters need to be the right weight to handle such a high amount of electricity, he said, or they too could start a fire.

Some fires this winter started because people tried to thaw water pipes with torches and lighters, Beachamp said.

Leaving the flame there will thaw the pipe but also could ignite the ceiling, he said.

People should use a hair dryer to keep pipes from freezing, or, better yet, wrap them with heat tape or insulation before the temperature drops, Beachamp said.

People should take those cautious measures to prevent fires in their homes, Beachamp said.

Even though people may think they are safe, a fire can destroy everything without warning, he said.

"People have the idea, it will never happen to me."

Law & Order

A LOOK AT CRIME ON CAMPUS AND IN THE COMMUNITY

UNL student raped near campus

An 18-year-old University of Nebraska-Lincoln freshman was raped Monday night, Feb. 12, just outside campus on her way home to Smith Residence Hall.

The victim told police she was walking home alone from Nebraska Wesleyan University after visiting a friend, Sgt. Ann Heermann said.

She stopped to sit down for five minutes on a bench in a brick pavilion near the Ready Mixed Concrete Company plant at 1800 Y St., Heermann said.

Two halogen lights shine up at a flagpole in the middle of the pavilion. A gazebo sits in an adjoining

pavilion, surrounded by evergreen trees. The rest of the area is open and flat.

The bench where she stopped was fewer than four blocks away from her residence hall, Heermann said.

At about 11:30 p.m., someone allegedly pulled her hair from behind and pushed her down to the ground, Heermann said. As she fell down, she hit her head on the cement bench.

The victim was still conscious but dazed when the perpetrator allegedly put something, possibly a hand or scarf, over her face so she

could not see him, Heermann said.

He then allegedly raped her and fled, Heermann said.

The victim, who reported the crime Wednesday, could not give police any description of her assailant.

Police are unsure why the victim, who owns a car, made the seven-mile walk from the Wesleyan campus, Heermann said. They plan to interview the victim again to see if any new information becomes available.

— Chad Lorenz

Cabinet meetings will discuss budget

UNL academic programs top the priority list

By Erin Schulte
Staff Reporter

The Chancellor's Cabinet began meetings this month with university faculty and administrators to draw up plans on how funds will be distributed in 1997 through 1999.

Joan Leitzel, vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said the committee's main goals were to identify strengths at the university and make sure money was allotted to support those programs.

The meetings are held in two-year

cycles. This year's meetings are concentrating on planning programs for the university, and the next meetings will concentrate on planning the budget, she said. This biennial plan is based on the two-year process of fund allocation by the Nebraska Legislature.

Academic college vice chancellors and deans present what they view as their colleges' strengths and weaknesses to the Chancellor's Cabinet, Leitzel said, and give their plans for allocation of funds.

Academic program funding is the top priority for financial backing, but there are other issues to be discussed, she said.

Facility needs — such as the renovation of Richards Hall and additions to Love Library — are big issues. The Chancellor's Cabinet researches

whether outside funds are available for those needs, Leitzel said.

The planning committee also writes UNL's Strategic Agenda to explain its reasons for wanting to expand certain programs or facilities, she said. The agenda justifies fund requests to the Legislature.

John Benson, director of institutional research and planning, said the two-year planning cycle was very effective.

"It allows us to concentrate on the right thing at the right time," Benson said. "If we're going to plan effectively, it has to be an integrated process considering a variety of determinants and priorities."

After the Chancellor's Cabinet listens to proposals, the proposals will be compiled into a recommendation to be voted on by the Board of Regents.

Job seekers to benefit from upcoming career fairs

The next few weeks will offer several opportunities for students on the job hunt.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Career Services is sponsoring an engineering and technical career fair in the Nebraska Union on Feb. 29 from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

All students interested in learning about engineering careers may attend. Students can contact John Rohde, as-

sociate professor of civil engineering, at 472-8807 for more information.

A government and non-profit career day is scheduled for March 7 from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Nebraska Union. More than 40 local and national government and non-profit organizations will be present to discuss job opportunities for students.

On March 15, a business dining etiquette seminar will be held at the

Wick Alumni Center from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

The seminar will teach students the proper way to conduct themselves in a formal, business-like environment. The cost is \$15, including dinner.

Students interested in the career day or etiquette seminar may contact Geri Cotter, acting director of the career services center, at 472-8029.

— Joshua Gillin

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