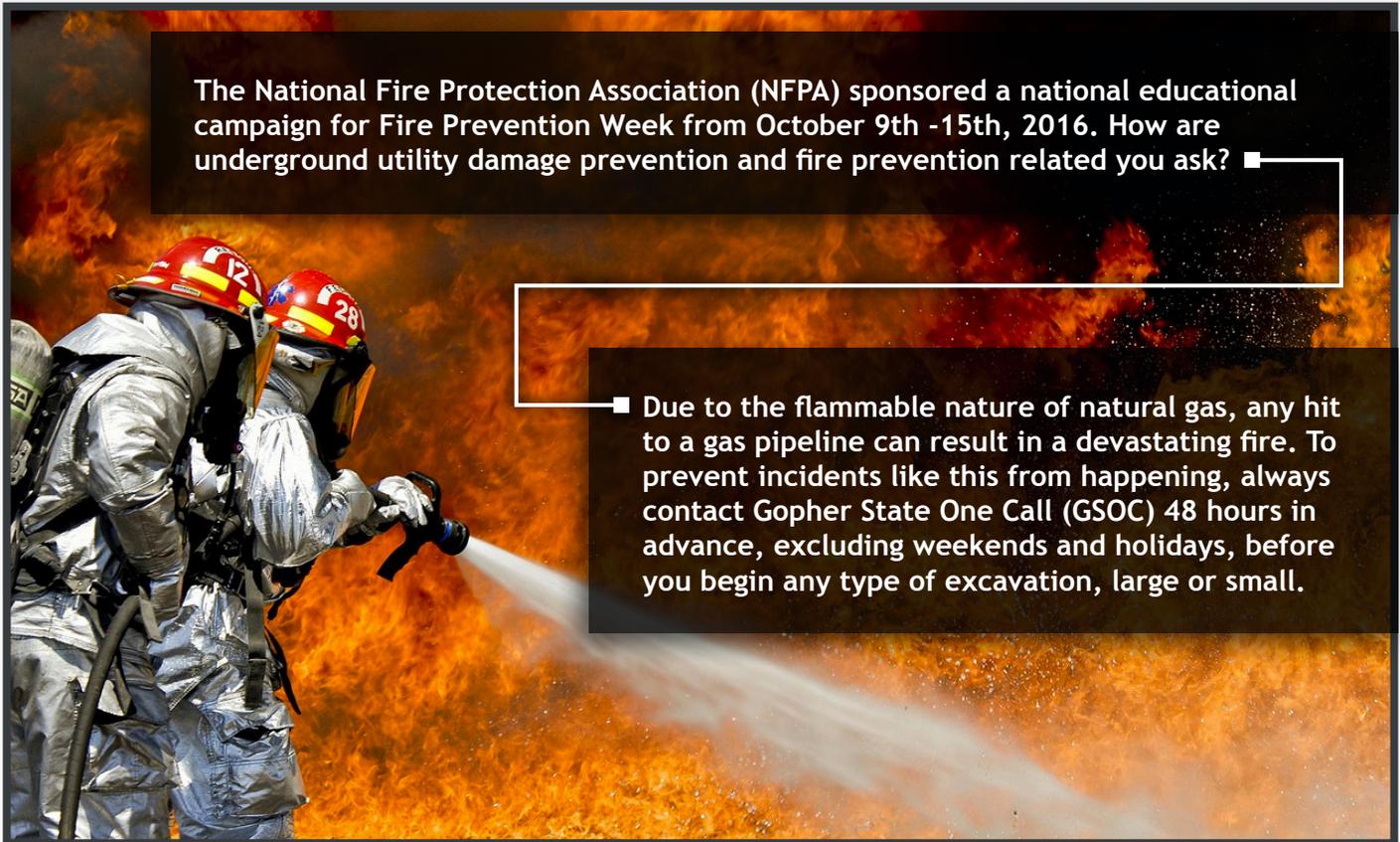




October 2016

October Fire Prevention Week

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The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) sponsored a national educational campaign for Fire Prevention Week from October 9th -15th, 2016. How are underground utility damage prevention and fire prevention related you ask? ■

■ Due to the flammable nature of natural gas, any hit to a gas pipeline can result in a devastating fire. To prevent incidents like this from happening, always contact Gopher State One Call (GSOC) 48 hours in advance, excluding weekends and holidays, before you begin any type of excavation, large or small.

Background on Fire Prevention Week

Have you heard of the ‘Moo’ myth¹? According to popular legend, the Great Chicago Fire broke out after Mrs. O’Leary’s cow kicked over a lamp, which set its barn and the rest of the city on fire. This conflagration lasted from October 8th- 9th, 1871. As a result of this historic incident, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first National Fire Prevention Day proclamation in 1920, which was followed by the establishment of Fire Prevention Week in 1922. Although the real cause of the Chicago fire remains unknown, this incident largely impacted the public’s view on fire prevention and safety.

Natural gas fires are unfortunate accidents that occur all over the country, including here in Minnesota. Two examples of devastating incidents “close-to-home” include:

- ²On February 1st, 2010, a homeowner hired a plumber to unclog a sewer line. The plumber ended up cutting a gas service line that had been cross bored through the house’s sewer line. The resulting explosive fire destroyed the house.
- ³A year later, on March 17th, 2011, when a 20-inch steel natural gas line buried beneath a Minneapolis neighborhood ruptured, the escaping gas ignited and forced the evacuation of nearby buildings and the closing of nearby highways.

Don't test your luck! Natural gas explosions can be prevented. If you strike a gas line while excavating or suspect a leak, take these steps to stay safe⁴:

1. Evacuate the area or building immediately. Alert others and leave doors open.
2. Get to a safe place and call 911. Make sure that you distance yourself from the leak because using an electronic device, such as a cellphone, can ignite leaking gas.
3. DON'T smoke, use matches, turn on electric switches, start or stop an engine, or do anything that could cause a spark.

We are all responsible for preventing fires. Educate yourself on how fires ignite. Be aware of your surroundings. Do your part and always contact GSOC before you begin any digging project!

¹Source: National Fire Protection Association. Click [here](#) for more information.

²Source: MPR. Click [here](#) for more information.

³Source: Star Tribune. Click [here](#) for more information.

⁴Source: Southwest Gas. Click [here](#) for more information.



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