

Westport chief talks to Weston Fire Dept. about building codes and fire prevention

Written by Patricia Gay

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The importance of adhering to building codes and fire prevention was presented in a program to the Weston Volunteer Fire Department on Feb. 9 at the Lyons Plain fire station in Weston.

Westport Fire Chief Andrew Kingsbury discussed building construction and the way it affects fire ground tactics.

One of the key points was about the widespread use of engineered lumber in residential homes and the increased potential for sudden collapse when those materials are exposed to fire.

Chief Kingsbury reviewed the ways in which a fire progresses through various forms of construction, including the balloon framing found in many of Weston's older homes, and the platform framing that became prevalent in the 1940s.

He also discussed modern truss construction and potential dangers to firefighters when trusses are poorly built.

"Chief Kingsbury's presentation underscored for me the importance of meticulous construction inspections before the siding and drywall hide the dangerous mistakes," said Weston firefighter Stephan Grozinger, who is also a Planning and Zoning commissioner. "That's obviously critical to keep occupants and firefighters safe."

The occurrence of residential building fires has dropped by 10% nationally since 2006 and by almost half since 1977. The frequency of serious house fires in Weston has dropped in the last three years, and the same thing is being mirrored nationally.

"No one is sure why, but the most compelling explanation is that we're all reaping the benefits of the fire and building codes," Mr. Grozinger said.

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"We're very grateful to Chief Kingsbury for preparing and coming up here to deliver this presentation to our firefighters," said John Pokorny, Weston's fire chief and fire marshal.