

# Firemen Burn Old Home for Drill

## Training Given; Methods Tested

People who happened by a house at 22801 Pennsylvania Ave. last Thursday may have been startled to notice that firemen weren't trying to put out the blaze, but were, for the most part, just watching. The firemen weren't a bit disturbed by the fire, because they set it.

It was part of a new training program, under which both rookies and more experienced firemen will learn about firefighting under 'ideal' conditions, if any fire can be called ideal.

### Cut Losses

This training program will attempt to cut the city's residential fire losses even lower than they are at present. During the first nine months this year, the firemen answered 91 calls to homes with a total loss of about \$12,000. Last year, they answered 132 calls with a loss of \$17,100.

In fighting any kind of fire, time saved may mean dollars saved and the test was designed to help the firemen save time when the real thing comes along.

The firemen obtained the house, which was scheduled to be torn down anyway, for practice. They filled it with old furniture obtained from the city dump.

### Men Trained

Then, each of the shifts at the city's four fire stations was given a chance to put out several different kinds of fires—in closets, couches, and attic, and to rescue a "victim" from the smoke-filled house.

Although this may sound like child's play to some, it gave the firemen a chance to learn about firefighting under various conditions and to test the value of "high pressure fog," a new fire-fighting device.

"People used to think that the best way to put out a fire was to douse it with as much water as possible," declared Battalion Chief Gordon Northington. "We have found that using high pressure fog is not only more effective, but causes much less water damage."

### Fine Mist

The "high pressure fog" is a method by which a small amount of water is turned into a room in a fine mist, rather than by the traditional "drown the fire" method. It is based on the principle that fog absorbs at least 10 times as much heat as does a solid stream of water. It turns to steam and expands more than 1700 times in volume, effectively blanketing the fire.

The fine spray more effectively puts out fires and, in addition, saves on water and water damage. In many fires, more than half of the damage to a home is done by the

water. One eastern city discovered that the year after it initiated the "high pressure" fire losses were only one-sixth of the previous year, although the number of blazes increased.

### Water Damage

A solid stream of water damages everything with which it comes in contact. If the drapes, for instance, are on fire, a solid stream of water will not only dampen the drapes but all nearby pieces of furniture, rugs, drapes, walls and floors.

In extinguishing six fires at the test house, firemen used only 30 gallons of water with the new method. They probably would have used 300 gallons by the old method.

As part of drill at the old house, each group of firemen put out a fire in a closet and in a couch and saved a "victim" from the burning house.

### "Victim" Escapes

A humorous sidelight to the rescue efforts was the fact that one of the fires spread more rapidly than anticipated and the "victim"—Fireman Ed Polston—had to leap out the window to save himself.

No two fires are ever alike because of construction of homes and of the varied ways in which the fires can start. However, the drill period gave the firemen a chance to grope through the smoke-filled rooms to locate the sources of a fire and the ways to quell several different types of blazes.

A fire in a closet or in a room can best be put out with high pressure fog; there is no substitute for the old-fashioned soaking in subduing smoldering ticking in a couch. The couch is carried outside if possible.

### Few Fires

Torrance has had few major house fires in recent months, due partly to several factors:

1. Continuous action on the part of the Fire Prevention Bureau in inspecting potential hazards and in lecturing on safety at schools, clubs, and other gatherings.
2. Better home construction, with lath and plaster walls instead of the old wood-frame construction.
3. Quicker reporting because of more dense population; usually someone notices a fire in a neighbor's home.

### Drills Planned

More drills in old houses are planned in the future, when suitable structures away



(Herald Photo)

WHAT'S THIS? . . . Engineer Ed Polston hasn't gone off his rocker as he pours kerosene on excelsior on the back porch of a house at 22801 Pennsylvania Ave. He's just getting ready for a test blaze to give local firefighters practice.



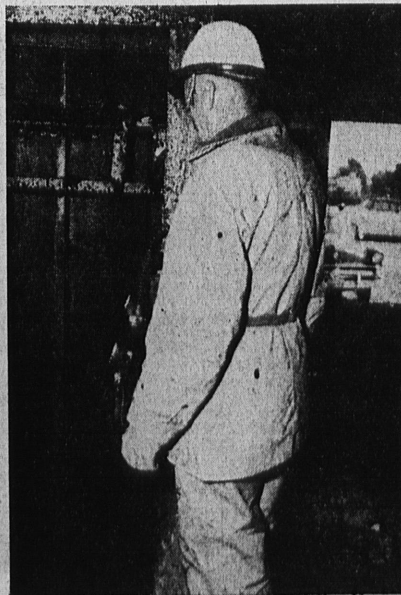
(Herald Photo)

LEGAL ARSON . . . Battalion Chief Gordon Northington adds flame to the fuel to set a roaring fire to test the methods of fire-fighting. The test proved, in part, that too much water isn't the best way to fight a fire; it's the way it's sprayed on the blaze.



(Herald Photo)

THESE WERE CLOTHES . . . Battalion Chiefs Gordon Northington and Gene Walker touch off a closet fire (left) which spread, within seconds, to two other rooms. Torrance firemen soon had the blaze under control and Capt. Leo Christian (right) surveys the damage to the closet



after the flames have been extinguished. Such fires are particularly well controlled by "high pressure fog" in which tiny droplets of water turn to steam and absorb the heat more rapidly.

YOUR SECOND FRONT PAGE

# Torrance Herald

EDITORIALS    ★ ★ ★    FEATURES    ★ ★ ★    WANT ADS

TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1957

Twenty-one



HOUSE BLAZES . . . This house, at 22801 Pennsylvania Ave., burned down by Torrance firemen to test fire-fighting techniques, is sprayed with water by Fireman Billy Wood to prevent the blaze from spreading. A number of

smaller fires were set and put out within the house before the final inferno of flames burned the house down to the foundation.

from other buildings can be found. When fighting a fire, time is extremely important. A time lag of a minute often can mean the difference between major and minor damage to a structure.

The wood frame house which the firemen practiced on was totally destroyed in about 30 minutes.

Smog officials stood by and watched as the black smoke billowed into the air, but there was nothing they could do.

It was one of those rare occurrences when there was a pre-scheduled officially sanctioned fire.

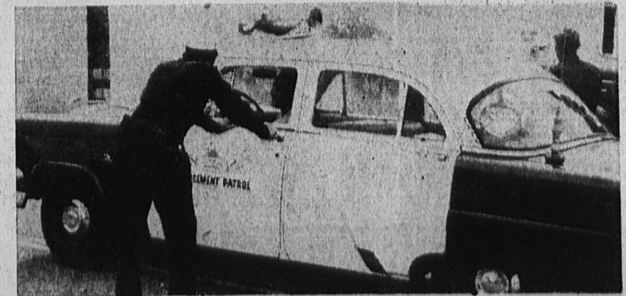
There is no substitute for experience, Fire Chief J. J. Benner pointed out. Some cities use a drill tower and smoke chamber for the same purpose.



DOUSE THAT LIGHT! . . . Fireman Richard DeArmitt sprays water on one of the fires set in the house burned by local firefighters. Each shift of firemen from all Stations were given turns at trying to extinguish various kinds of fire.



FIREMAN, SAVE MY CHILD . . . This is no child, but only Engineer Ed Polston, who is being rescued from a blazing house by Capt. Leo Christian and Fireman Leo Manning. Each group of firemen had to rescue Polston from somewhere inside the burning house as part of the test. Once, however, flames spread too rapidly and Polston had to leap out a rear window.



LOTS OF SMOG . . . One of the observers at the test fire set by Torrance firemen last week was a smog control official, shown here watching the blaze. The fire was checked with Air Pollution officials before the test was made.