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**Grace Hallowell:** What's Up, College Station? I'm Grace Hallowell and today I'm joined once again by Stu the fire guy. Welcome, Stu.

**Stuart Marrs:** Good to be here.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes, it is our annual 4th of July "don't set off fireworks within city limits" episode.

**Stuart Marrs:** That's right. The fire department appreciates it. If you would not blow your fingers off with fireworks this year.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes. That is something we are asking very kindly, very nicely. And people know you here. You've been on the show before. So my first question is what changes for you in the summertime versus the rest of the year.

**Stuart Marrs:** For the fire department? What changes is the heat since we do so much EMS at the fire department running the ambulance, responding to 911 calls. We see an increase in heat related emergencies. That's just people getting out and being active, doing sports or doing work in their yard and becoming overwhelmed with the heat or because they didn't. They're not drinking enough water or they didn't wear the proper clothing for the heat.

**Stuart Marrs:** So we see an increase in heat related calls. And when things dry out, when we don't have enough rain, we see an increase in wildland fires. And usually in the city that's just something along the highway. A small spot fire down highway six or along some of our other busier streets. But we do get out in the county some bigger fires, and we respond with the county fire departments to go help with those, too.

**Stuart Marrs:** So we see fires and we see heat related emergencies during the summer.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes, I had my first brush of like a heat related situation where I was like, oh boy, I need to cool down. This was a few months ago. We went to Disneyland in California and I thought I had been drinking enough water, but it was a long day of traveling and flying and I was not properly hydrated and I could start feeling my muscles shake and I was like, oh, this is this is intense.

**Grace Hallowell:** I need some water, some electrolytes and AC break. Yeah. Need to ride. It's a small world for a little bit. Cool off.

**Stuart Marrs:** Those are all good ideas. Yes. Drink plenty of water ahead of time if you can. Or try to catch up. Drink water, drink Gatorade, a sports drink. If you're sweating, especially drink those electrolytes. Find some cool place to sit down and rest and plan your activities for early in the day. Or maybe late in the day, but not during the middle of the day in the height of the heat.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes, absolutely. So what is your favorite part about your job during the summer months?

**Stuart Marrs:** I'll answer it this way. So during the summertime, because it is so hot outside, a lot of the training that we do as firefighters, we move it inside. And so if we can do our training in the bay where we're just in the shade and or if we can do our training inside, sometimes our training involves classroom training.

**Stuart Marrs:** So instead of being outside on a rooftop or outside on some of our fire training props, we'll move our training inside to a classroom. We'll focus more on EMS training that we can do inside. That way we are not out exposed to the heat and wearing ourselves out doing our normal training, and we're still fresh and able to go to those calls that we have to go to during the summer.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes, absolutely. Summer can be a brutal in Texas if you are outside. So what are some of the most common fire risks that residents face during the summer months?

**Stuart Marrs:** A lot of it is just dry grass and that's from it. Might be someone dragging their chains on a trailer down the highway. It might be someone who's out doing some yard work with a weed eater or a chainsaw, and they set that hot engine down in the grass to do something else for a while, and that hot engine will start a fire.

**Stuart Marrs:** And another thing that is, is a danger is people burning when they shouldn't be, or burning and not paying attention to it, burning trash or burning a little brush pile, or even grilling outside and not staying by the grill and paying attention to it. And those those fires can get blown up, blown away, and start fires where you don't want fire.

**Grace Hallowell:** So what are some simple steps that families can take to reduce the risk of a fire emergency at their home?

**Stuart Marrs:** Just have adult supervision at all times. If you're doing anything that is risky, especially if you're in a place in the county where you can do fireworks this year, always have adult supervision. With the 4th of July and pretty much all summer long, you want to be outside, you want to be grilling, or you want to have a little campfire and roast marshmallows.

**Stuart Marrs:** Always have adult supervision. Always have somebody who's watching out because little kids love to play and experiment with fire. Just poke a stick in there and catching

the fire, wave it around and catch a marshmallow on fire. And when they're not being supervised by someone who can keep them safe, then the accidents happen. That might be catching something on fire that might be also might be burning themselves or burning a friend who's nearby.

**Stuart Marrs:** So always have adult supervision when you're doing anything that involves fire outside.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes. And speaking of grilling and cooking outdoors, what are the most important safety tips? I know we touched on it there. People should remember before starting their grill.

**Stuart Marrs:** What people love to do is start their grill and walk off to let it heat up. Have a plan to do something where you're nearby that grill and watching it. Whether it's charcoal or gas. You want to be nearby and watching it because any number of things can happen. You can have a flare up from old grease that's on the grill.

**Stuart Marrs:** It can get knocked over by a pet or a child. It can blow over on a windy day. So it always plan to be out there with the grill. Don't start it and go back inside for 15 minutes to prepare the food. Have somebody out there who's with it and watching it. Another good idea is to have a water hose that can reach that area.

**Stuart Marrs:** You don't have to turn it on and have it charged and ready to go, but have a water hose already connected that will reach the area where your grill is, just in case something happens and something catches on fire that doesn't need to be on fire. You can quickly get water out there and put the fire out.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes. And how far should grills be kept from homes, garages, decks or other structures?

**Stuart Marrs:** There's a minimum number of feet, but. But far enough away so that you can get the fire out. If the grass catches on fire between your house and your grill, you where you have time to go. Put it out. Yes, I think ten feet is the minimum, but that seems really close. Yeah, another good idea is to keep your grill if you have a patio or a gravel driveway.

**Stuart Marrs:** If it's put it on the patio, a concrete patio, not a wood deck, but a concrete patio or a gravel driveway, so that if anything falls out or hot grease pours out, splashes out, runs out. It's not running onto wood or onto grass.

**Grace Hallowell:** And what should someone do if a grease fire does occur?

**Stuart Marrs:** The best thing to do if your grill catches on fire and it's usually the fats and oils and the grease that's in it makes it flare up. Best thing to do is to stop the heat source. So turn off the propane or put water onto the coals that are burning. Yes. Now that's putting water on. It's going to ruin your food.

**Stuart Marrs:** I'm sorry. That's that's unfortunate.

**Grace Hallowell:** Maybe you order.

**Stuart Marrs:** A pizza that does a whole lot better than having to deal with a fire on your patio, or. Or the fire spreading to the grass, or the fire spreading to another structure. So remove the heat source is. And that's same thing goes for fires in your kitchen. If you have a fire on your stovetop, you turn the stove off.

**Stuart Marrs:** If you have a fire in your oven, you turn the oven off and then, just cool the area, cool the grill cool. It's on fire with water if you have it, or use an extinguisher if you have it.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes. And are there common grilling mistakes that tend to surprise you when you see them?

**Stuart Marrs:** They don't surprise me anymore. I've seen them too often. It's what what gets people in trouble is walking away from the grill. Yeah, and that's because you get flare flare ups. Grills are just not always clean. Yeah. And that old grease accumulates and they flare up. And that's what gets people in trouble. They flare up. And besides ruining their food, they have a big fireball.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yeah. And I would rather have ruined food and have to order DoorDash than a big fireball and. Sounds like a whole mess. Yes. Well, switching gears here to talk about firework safety, it is the America 250 celebration this year. I expect there are going to be some big celebrations. Fireworks are definitely popular. What are the regulations regarding fireworks in College Station?

**Stuart Marrs:** So fireworks are not allowed within the city limits of College Station or the city limits of Bryan, right? They are just not allowed. If you are popping firecrackers in the city limits and we have to come out, we are going to take the fireworks away and we're going to give you a citation. So don't do it. It's best to go to a professional show and enjoy fireworks that way.

**Stuart Marrs:** Even if you're in part of Brazos County where you can use fireworks, I'm still recommending that you go to a professional show and do that because there is a risk of fire. There is a risk of burns. Even if you're very careful, you can get burned or a small child can get burned. Actually, the worst firework out there for burns and burn injuries every year is the is the same one that we hand all the little kids.

**Stuart Marrs:** It's sparklers.

**Grace Hallowell:** Which is crazy.

**Stuart Marrs:** Yeah, we're usually very careful about the big fireworks that make the loud boom, but we light sparklers and hand them to little children. And that's why we have so many burns.

They they they burn at up to 1200 degrees or hotter. And then even after they burn out with the little kids, do they just throw them down? Throw them down to the grass.

**Stuart Marrs:** So they started grass fire, or some other little barefoot kid comes and steps on it or something like that happens. So even the ones that seem very safe and child friendly, sparklers can be very dangerous. So a good alternative for fireworks is glow sticks, confetti, poppers, other noisemakers, and silly string. Even that mess to pick up.

**Stuart Marrs:** But anything else that isn't a spark or a flame, but children can still find to have fun with is a good alternative for fireworks.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes, water guns.

**Stuart Marrs:** Even water guns. Oh, yeah. Perfect.

**Grace Hallowell:** There you go. So how does extreme heat? I know we mentioned this at the top of the show increase a fire risk during the summer. We've touched on the safety risks of it, but how does the extreme temperatures pose risks to fires?

**Stuart Marrs:** So you're going to have if you have dry conditions and you throw fireworks on top of that, you have extra risk. Even in everyone's seen a professional show where one of the rockets doesn't go as high as it should or gets knocked over and goes off to the side. So that can happen to you. It can. And if that, if that rocket explodes too close to the ground or on the ground, all of a sudden you have hundreds of little fires that could potentially start all over your property.

**Stuart Marrs:** And if the conditions are dry and even a little bit windy, you're going to have a really big problem really quickly.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes. So come to our iHeart America celebration at Wolf Creek on the fourth. The gates, I believe, open at 7:00. Leave that to the professionals. It'll be a great show and it'll save you your fingers if you do it yourself. So what should residents do if they spot a grass or brush fire?

**Stuart Marrs:** If you notice a grass fire, call 911 first. Get emergency responders on the way. We have very fast response from the city of College Station in the city of Bryan, but also our volunteer departments in the county are actually not just volunteer departments anymore. They have paid staff on duty at these Brazos County fire departments. So there's always someone ready to respond, and they can respond very quickly.

**Stuart Marrs:** And they have the right equipment for a brush fire or wildland fire. They have trucks that can go off road and carry water to the fire. So call 911 from your cell phone immediately to get help on the way. If you can get water to the fire through a water hose or a bucket, do that. Otherwise try to smother it out.

**Stuart Marrs:** And then if you have to warn others, if the fire is moving towards someone's home or someone's property, then you need to call your neighbor or go knock on the door and warn them.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes, and I know we mentioned talking about being supervising children when you are cooking outdoors, are there as fire involved, but that goes for pets to correct.

**Stuart Marrs:** That's right. Just establish a no go zone around your grill when you're outside. No kids allowed, no pets allowed. If that means you have to put the dog in the kennel for a while, then put the dog in the kennel. Move the kid games away from the grill. Just don't let that happen and be. It's a distraction for you and it's dangerous for the kids.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yeah, so switching gears from outside to inside, how often should smoke alarms be tested and why is it so important to test those?

**Stuart Marrs:** We say test them twice a year. A good way to remember that is if you set your clocks back for time change, go around the house and test your smoke detectors or any other time you think about it. If it's just been a while, test your smoke detectors. There's a button on them you push says push the test.

**Stuart Marrs:** It'll give it a few beeps. You'll know that it's good to go. A lot of smoke detectors now have a ten year battery in them, so you don't have to change the batteries every six months and put a new nine volt battery in there. They just come with a battery that lasts for about ten years, but you still want to test those and make sure that they're working.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes. And then how important is it to have a fire extinguisher nearby or a fire safety kit in your home for just in case things go wrong?

**Stuart Marrs:** In our house we have a we have a fire extinguisher in the kitchen, and we have a first aid kit for simple little things that could happen, like a burn that happens in the kitchen. Often. We also keep an alum growing somewhere in a window sill or out on the patio. But the important thing about a fire extinguisher sometimes I've seen in people's homes, they buy one, they think, oh, I'm good, and they put it under the sink.

**Stuart Marrs:** And then after several months, after several years, the fire extinguisher gets pushed to the back and it's behind the Clorox wipes and it's behind the Fabuloso and it's behind the bar keeper's friend, and it's behind all the stuff that you usually go to first. And way back in the back is the fire extinguisher and it's forgotten about. And then if something happens on the stove top, you're looking around for it.

**Stuart Marrs:** You can't remember where it is. Our sits out on the countertop. It is right there. It's not the prettiest countertop decoration ever, but it is very important to know where it is so that it can be grabbed very quickly.

**Grace Hallowell:** Do those ever expire? Is that something you.

**Stuart Marrs:** Need to do? Yeah. They'll come with a tag. They'll come with an expiration date, and they do need to be disposed of and replaced when they expire.

**Grace Hallowell:** And how would someone dispose of an old extinguisher?

**Stuart Marrs:** The most fun way to dispose of an old fire extinguisher is to take it out and practice with it. Okay, because it may be out of date, but it probably still has some pressure in it. So just pretend that you have a fire in a little certain area and practice pulling the pin and aiming and squeezing and sweeping it side to side and watch the dust come out the powder come out the extinguishing agent and use it as practice.

**Stuart Marrs:** And then it's empty and it doesn't have charge in it, and you can throw it away and go buy another one.

**Grace Hallowell:** I never would have thought.

**Stuart Marrs:** Of that. They're not they're not inherently dangerous. I mean, they're just a pressurized can. And so I'd say go out and practice with it, show the kids how it works, let them practice with a little bit, let them feel what it feels like to squeeze it and see the powder come out and then go buy a new one.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes. And why is it so important for families to practice fire drills or safety drills in their home?

**Stuart Marrs:** Yeah, it's important for families to practice these because it's something that you want to have. It's the motions you want to have gone through before you have to do it for real. And so you want to practice exiting the house when it feels more safe for the kids and for everybody. Like, do it during the day where you can see everything so that when you have to do it at night, when it's dark, you'll you'll be more comfortable and more capable.

**Stuart Marrs:** So practice with the kids, okay? If the fire, if the smoke detector goes off, the smoke alarm goes off, it's going to sound like this. And make it go off and let them listen to the sound and then practice with them. How are they going to get from their room to the nearest exit? How are they going to?

**Stuart Marrs:** What does it feel like to crawl to the nearest exit? Do they have stairs that they have to go down, or stairs that they have to go up? Is there is there obstacles that are going to be in the way? And what if this way is blocked? What if I can't go that way? Where am I going to go next?

**Stuart Marrs:** What if I can't get out of my room? What if I feel the door and it's really hot? Or I open the door and all the smoke comes in at me and I have to shut my door again, what am I going to do then? What are all my options? Have them practice that during the day when they can ask questions, when they can get it wrong so that you can correct them.

**Stuart Marrs:** And then if it ever happens, they've been through the motions a few times. They're sleepy. They'll hopefully remember what to do.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes. And that is something that I.

**Grace Hallowell:** Remember practicing as a kid. Like I'm never going to need to know this. Like it's fine, there's not going to be a fire. And then one day something called on fire in the kitchen and I was in my room. I opened my door, all the smoke comes in and I had to think back to. Oh my gosh, what did we practice?

**Grace Hallowell:** And that is something I did remember in that high pressure situation, going through all the drills, army crawling out of my room to get out of the house, and thankfully it was a small fire and it didn't cause too much damage. But those skills that we practice, they really come into play in that emergency situation well.

**Stuart Marrs:** And it's important to for the adults in the House to be on the same page about what we're going to do, especially if there's young children. So, like my wife and I, we need to know who's going to go get the four year old and who's going to see about the pets and who's going to make sure that the ten year old and the 13 year old did what they were supposed to do and got out, and who's going to who's going to actually pick up the phone and call 911 while all this other stuff is going on.

**Stuart Marrs:** So and there's just a lot to think about really quickly, which is why it's good to practice and it's good to practice often. It's not something that you can do once and think we're good. We practiced a few years ago, practice every year. Make it. Make it something that you do regularly as a family, and you can make it into a game almost if you want to.

**Stuart Marrs:** Another thing to consider is if you have if you have guests over often, say grandma always comes over to visit you. Make sure she is aware of what what to do. If there's a fire. Where are we supposed to meet outside? Do we meet by the mailbox? Do we meet by the big tree? Do we meet at the neighbor's front door?

**Stuart Marrs:** That way, if people who are usually over at your house as company, if you. If you have guests over a lot, let them know what the plan is, because it could happen on a night when you have company, right?

**Grace Hallowell:** Absolutely. It doesn't pick and choose when it's going to start. So briefly, we'll mention gathering around pools because it is hot in the summer and that is a great way to cool off. Are there any fire or electrical safety concerns people should keep in mind when being around water?

**Stuart Marrs:** Yeah, if you're it's summertime and so you're going to find yourself at a pool. One rule that we have in our family and that we share with all of our friends when we're at the pool, is everybody is a lifeguard. Yes. Even if you're at a city pool where they have lifeguards in red suits who are up on the lifeguard stand under the umbrella watching.

**Stuart Marrs:** Still, everybody at the pool is a lifeguard. Everybody needs to be scanning. In a way, though. There's a little kid over there. I'm going to, , just watch that little kid. Is that one struggling? No. Okay. That one's. Oh, the mom is right there. Okay. Everybody is a lifeguard when you're at the pool. Even if I have a ten year old and she swims for Tsunami Swim Team.

**Stuart Marrs:** The swim team in College Station. I tell her you're a lifeguard. If you see another kid struggling, go help. If you get help, you are on duty as a lifeguard. It doesn't matter that you're here for fun with your friends. If you see someone struggling, which just be scanning the pool and that for all the parents to. Don't just watch your kids, watch out for the other kids there.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes, absolutely. And that goes for at home or at the community pools. We're all in this together. Help keep everybody safe. But before we wrap up, in summary, what is the best piece of advice you can give for fire safety in the summer?

**Stuart Marrs:** Fire safety in the summer is to be present. If you've got a grill going or a campfire, or you're doing fireworks or you're at the pool, just be present.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes, well, we have a fun, quick lightning round of questions before we end. Are you ready?

**Stuart Marrs:** I'm ready.

**Grace Hallowell:** Okay. Gas grill or charcoal grill?

**Stuart Marrs:** Gas.

**Grace Hallowell:** Okay. Best way to stay cool during a Texas summer.

**Stuart Marrs:** Go to H-E-B and stand in front of the ice cream. The blue Bell display.

**Grace Hallowell:** Okay. Yeah, that's a good one. What is one thing residents would be surprised to learn about firefighters?

**Stuart Marrs:** Firefighters in College Station mostly do EMS work? Yes, we fight very few fires.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes, most important thing to do when a smoke alarm goes off.

**Stuart Marrs:** Is to get out.

**Grace Hallowell:** Yes. And finally, if you could give every resident one fire safety reminder, what would it be?

**Stuart Marrs:** Check your smoke detectors.

**Grace Hallowell:** Check your smoke detectors. All right. Well, thank you so much for being here today.

**Stuart Marrs:** Thank you.

**Grace Hallowell:** Enjoyed it. And that's what's up.