

[Narrator] You've tuned in to another  
edition of The Breakroom, a

weekly conversation about how  
the City of Saint Augustine

works from those who do the  
work every day. Hosted by the

City of Saint Augustine's  
communications director Melissa

Wissel. The Breakroom offers a  
closer look at the different

city departments and provides  
updates on current and upcoming

projects and events and now  
your host Melissa Wissel.

[Melissa] Welcome to The Breakroom.  
Thanks for tuning in. I'm

Melissa Wissel, Communications  
Director for the City of Saint

Augustine. In studio this week,  
we are talking fire prevention,

fire safety, whatever else  
comes to mind when it comes to

fire. We have City of Saint  
Augustine's Fire Marshal, Abby

Pedigo in the break room.  
Welcome back, Abby. [Abby] Thanks for

having me again. [Melissa] Uh you and I  
were talking about notes and

what we have to talk about. Um  
you've been here now many many

times. [Abby] Several times. [Melissa] Um this  
is our opportunity to talk

about Fire Prevention Week. I  
know some places they've

celebrate for the month last  
year during the official

Prevention Week we had Hurricane  
Ian. This year things just

they're always busy. [Abby] They are

busy and we do celebrate for

the month here in the city. We  
have so many schools and

daycares that we like to visit  
and assisted living facilities

so it really does take up the  
entire month by the time we get

around to visiting all those  
places and educating everybody

we really want to speak to.

[Melissa] Tell me a little bit about

going to the schools. I never  
thought about it but you once

said something to me about you  
like to go into the schools and

talk to the kids in the turnout  
gear. [Abby] We do. Yeah. We love

visiting the schools. Uh I like  
to talk to the kids first

usually inside about fire  
safety and fire prevention. We

go over whatever the theme of  
fire prevention week is that

year and this year it happens  
to be cooking safety starts

with you. Pay attention to fire  
prevention. Um so we educate

the kids on whatever the theme  
is. We talk a little bit about

fire safety and what they do at  
home to prevent fires and what

to do if a fire does start and  
then we do like to get in the

turnout gear for them just so  
they're familiar with what a

firefighter looks like in that  
gear. It can be really scary

when they they get everything  
on. They put on the mask and

the the air bottle on their  
back, the air tank. So, we want

kids to be familiar with what  
we look like and to know that

we're their friend and to  
recognize. [Melissa] Cuz you're not

coming in just in your fire  
logo shirt when they're in a

fire. You [Abby] yes so we just want  
them to recognize us and be

familiar and so we we slowly  
put on the gear we talk through

it with them and then the  
firefighter walks around gives

everybody a high five and  
answers any questions they have

and we just we just want them  
to be familiar with us [Melissa] Did you

guys you didn't you used to I'm

putting you on the spot here a

little bit you used to do a

poster contest [Abby] We do. We still

have a poster contest [Melissa] Excellent

[Abby] We have had the poster contest

running now since I think 1975.

[Melissa] Wow. [Abby] It is a ongoing campaign

that we have. [Melissa] Okay. [Abby] So, we love  
the poster contest. Uh kids

from all of our public

elementary schools, grades

first through fourth can enter

the poster contest. We select

two winners, one from grades

first and second and one from

grades third and fourth and

they make some sort of poster

that embodies fire prevention,

whatever it is that we talked

about that year and and we  
select the winners from the

school. They get spend the day  
with us at the fire station. We

pick them up from school in the  
firetruck. They spend the day

with us. We give them lunch and  
then we take them back at the

end of the day but they get a  
trophy. We have a little award

ceremony for them and it's it's  
a fun day. [Melissa] Really fun. [Abby] Yeah.

[Melissa] Excellent. So, we've probably  
missed that this year at this

point. [Abby] We have not yet. Nope.  
Nope. So, we are in the middle

of Fire Prevention Week right  
now now that you and I are

doing the interview and we're  
holding the poster contest

award ceremony at the end of  
the month. So, we have not yet

and the winners and we haven't  
had the [Melissa] so how do we how do you

enter if you if you're [Abby] We talk  
to the we talk to the kids

about it while we're at the  
school so Ketterlinas, CPS and RB

Hunt are are eligible schools  
to participate and we talk to

the kids while we're there we  
give them all the rules they

make a poster something that  
embodies fire prevention

whatever speaking to them that  
year and and then we collect

all the posters at the end of  
the month [Melissa] so we're going to

check back in with you at the



end of the and we'll make sure

to post that. [Abby] Yes. [Melissa] On your  
Facebook page. [Abby] Yes we will. We

will share the winners and  
we'll we'll share pictures of

their posters and all that good  
stuff. [Melissa] Okay. And we have been

doing we have a video out there  
about fire prevention. It's

probably been a while so maybe  
we can get together and and do

a new video. [Abby] Yeah. Yeah. That  
would be great. [Melissa] The one of the

things you're talking about  
with the kitchen cooking

safety. [Abby] Mm hmm. [Melissa] Um is one of  
the things and now we're

getting into the holiday  
season. Give us some things.

[Abby] Yeah. [Melissa] Like someone might say.

[Abby] Cooking is a big deal during

the holidays. Uh Thanksgiving  
and Christmas are the two

leading days for cooking fires  
throughout throughout the

nation. So those are big ones.  
I think it just comes down to

people multitasking. They have  
friends and family. They're

entertaining. They forget to  
set timers. They leave the

kitchen. They walk away from  
their food. Um so a lot of that

plays into those cooking fires. [Melissa] Those hot pads a little too close to the stove top.

[Abby] Yeah, just clutter around the

stove top is a big contributing  
factor. Uh like I said, not not

setting a timer, just having  
too much going on. One thing we

always remind people of is to  
turn the handles of your pots

or pans towards the back of the  
stove so they're not sticking

out if you're walking by or  
people are walking by. They may

knock over those hot pots and  
pans. So, always turn the

handles to the back. Set a  
timer if you have to leave the

kitchen. Uh the the saying this  
year is watch what you heat.

Not watch what you eat but  
watch what you heat. So. [Melissa] Okay.

[Abby] Uh that's just to remind people  
to stay in the kitchen. Don't

leave if you're cooking. Stay  
there. Keep an eye on the food

that you're cooking and. [Melissa] Keep

the kids away. [Abby] Don't forget about it.

[Melissa] Aside from them wanting to  
touch it and eat it. [Abby] Yes

exactly. Yeah we always say  
keep kids three feet away from

the stove. That there's kind of  
a hot zone around the stove if

anything falls or or they bump  
the the dials on the on the

stove they could end up burning  
the food or starting a fire so

[Melissa] also with holidays I'll bring  
up to we can just jump right

into the trees candles  
electrical you want to talk

about that a little bit yes

[Abby] those are all all big fire

starters during the holidays so  
if you're if you're putting up

Christmas lights just look over  
your string lights make sure

that the strings are intact  
they're not getting too old

don't connect too many strings  
of lights together [Melissa] So don't put

five of them. Maybe just one or  
two. [Abby] No there's there are

manufacturers recommendations  
on those those instructions. So

read what those say and follow  
them. Um but just just keep an

eye on those those lights. Make  
sure to water your tree. If the

tree starts drying out and you  
have electrical lights that

have exposed wires and that  
sort of thing. That's a recipe

for disaster. Make sure you're  
extinguishing candles before

you leave the room. Any space  
heaters. Keep space heaters at

least three feet away from  
anything combustible. [Melissa] So. Lots

of lots of good pointers. If  
you're just now tuning in,

you're listening to the break  
room. I have Abby Pedigo with

us in studio this week. Uh she  
is the city's fire marshal

giving us some really great  
prevention tips not only for

the cooking safety but with the  
holidays coming things to be

aware of. Uh one other thing as  
we continue our conversation

topics that come up. I thought  
this was something else

interesting you've mentioned

and talked with us before is

talking about how fires spread  
more rapidly. I'll say it in

today's day which you think  
wise today any different fires

fire but floor plans and  
manufacturing materials. [Abby] Yeah

it has a lot to do with the way  
that homes are built now and

the materials that are inside  
the home. So the open floor

plans that everybody is so  
crazy about really contribute

to heat spread and smoke  
spread. Um the the fires aren't

as compartmentalized as they  
used to be [Melissa] with shutting the door to the great

room. [Abby] Right right. with the the  
kitchen flows into the living

room which flows into the  
dining room and well that's

great for entertaining It it  
also allows smoke and heat to

flow through those spaces and  
so fire can spread more easily

and then just the materials  
that are in people's homes

nowadays are usually made more  
of synthetic fibers, plastics,

poly, you know, polyurethane and  
polyester and just materials

that contribute to hotter fires  
and fires that spread more

rapidly. So, whereas 40-50  
years ago you would have 15

minutes to get out of your  
house if there was a fire. Now

you only have like two to five  
minutes to get out before



[Melissa] before the fire can just  
literally just goes up in

flames. [Abby] Yeah yeah and before  
just the smoke gets gets too

bad too. So it's important. We  
always remind people to have a

home escape plan. I talked to  
the kids at the schools just

about doing fire drills at  
school. Um you should do fire

drills at home too and make  
sure that everybody can get out

of the house quickly. You a  
plan with your family. Make

sure that your exits aren't  
blocked. Make sure that your

windows are are openable and  
accessible and that everyone in

the house can get out of a

window if they need to. Um but

but you have a plan and you  
practice it because you really

do not have much time if you do  
have a fire in in today's day

and age in your house. [Melissa] Don't  
necessarily I when you say that

too I think about the house  
that I grew up in. You know

narrow hallways. [Abby] Yes. [Melissa] Small  
bedrooms. [Abby] Mine too. Yep. [Melissa] You

know small little family room  
which leads to a small little

dining room. [Abby] Yes. And  
everything was very segmented

in my house. We had a a  
definitive dining room and a

definitive living room and.

[Melissa] Here's your kitchen. [Abby] Some

houses just aren't aren't like  
that anymore. [Melissa] Not not something

that we would normally think  
about. [Abby] Right. [Melissa] Necessarily. Um

also so before we wrap up you  
were talking about going to

talk to the kids but you did  
mention the nursing homes and

us adult folks. [Abby] Yeah. [Melissa] Talk a  
little bit about some of the

you will come in and install or  
inspect smoke detectors. [Abby] We

will install smoke alarms in  
people's homes if they don't

have them already. Yes or if  
you have old smoke alarms you

need them replaced or you need  
us to change the batteries for

you. We will bring out the  
ladders and we will do that for

you. So so folks don't have to  
get up on a ladder if they

don't want to but we always try  
to remind people in the city

that we are happy to install  
smoke alarms for you. We

actually get them donated by  
the Home Depot. They provide us

with tons of smoke alarms every  
year and and that's for us to

provide to the residents of the  
city to keep everybody safe.

So, if you need smoke alarms in  
the house, we give us a call.

We will come install them for  
you. You call. No no charge.

[Melissa] 8251098. [Abby] That's correct.

Yes. [Melissa] Talk to Vicky. [Abby] Yes. [Melissa] She's

great. She's manning the phone.

[Abby] I I just did a talk for some

people at the Council on Aging  
a couple weeks ago and reminded

them and we've since gotten a  
few calls from them to come out

and install alarms so we're  
we're happy to do that. [Melissa] Well, I

think the what's important to  
me is you guys are very busy.

You are not sitting in the  
station waiting for that bell

to go off. [Abby] No. [Melissa] For that bell to  
ring. [Abby] Right. [Melissa] If you will, the

alarm to ring. Um you're out in  
the community. You're also

inspecting businesses. [Abby] Yes.

Yup. [Melissa] Short-term rentals. [Abby] Yes.

How are we seeing? [Abby] Commercial  
inspections, short-term rental

inspections. We are busier than  
ever with those things. Tons of

new construction. So, those  
just add even more inspections

to us but but no we're we're  
staying up on all those

inspections, getting out in the  
community. [Melissa] New truck. [Abby] And just

trying to keep people safe. [Melissa] Did you guys get a new truck? [Abby] We

have we got a new ladder truck  
a few months ago and now we

also have a high water vehicle.  
Um it's called an LMTV and it

is used for high water. So  
we're it's kind of our storm

truck. We can go through the  
deep water with that. Um and

that's not to encourage people  
to [Melissa] No. [Abby] Stick around during the

storm. Um truck does not have  
firefighting capability. It

doesn't have it doesn't have  
space to carry medical

equipment or anything like  
that. It's really just to get

us around if we if we  
absolutely have to. It can

carry a little boat around but  
so we're using that now if if

we need it. [Melissa] If we so before we  
wrap up that brings me to my

last comment which is about our  
storms. We're seeing a lot more

storm surge or storm flooding.

[Abby] Yes. [Melissa] Not relating to hurricanes

or tidal tidal flooding. What  
what's your what's your plea to

our resident? Think you just  
said it. Don't drive in the

water. [Abby] Yeah in in the city it's  
we kind of expect during these

these high tidal surges and a  
lot of rain the city is going

to flood. Just if you know that  
your car is one to to that's

low to the ground or one to  
stall out. Try not to drive

through standing water. Uh we  
we see a lot of people stalling

out in the standing water. So  
so try to stay out of that. Try

to avoid those areas where  
where there's a lot of standing

water and flooding throughout  
the city. [Melissa] And driving faster

doesn't make it better. [Abby] It does  
not Try not to to wake out the

businesses and the residents.



You know, love thy neighbor.

[Melissa] Love thy neighbor. Yeah, it's a tough one. Uh we did a

campaign. We've we're we've are continuing the campaign this

year if people see it. Um hashtag don't be that guy. [Abby] Oh

gosh. [Melissa] I mean it. I hate to say it but it was one of those we

kind of no pun intended tested the waters with it but it's

really that simple. Don't be that guy. [Abby] Right. [Melissa] You know, when

you're the one in your home or your business and somebody

drives through and plows and that waked water comes in, you

wouldn't want someone doing that to you. [Abby] No, absolutely not

and I see that the Flagler  
College students walking down

the sidewalk all the time. Try  
not to splash people who are

walking down the sidewalk who  
have to walk to class in the

rain and you know, they're  
already getting rained on. The

last thing they need is to get  
splashed from somebody's dirty

water road wake. [Melissa] Yeah. Well,  
Abby, lots of great tips, lots

of great information. This  
year's campaign, cooking safety

starts with you. Pay attention  
to fire prevention. Keep those

handles way from the edge of  
the stove. Keep the kids out.

Remember the the the heat ring  
around around that space and

just be safe. So thanks for  
stopping in. We're out of time.

[Abby] Of course, thanks for having  
me. [Melissa] If you missed part of this

broadcast and want to go back  
and listen from the beginning,

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tuning in. Until next time.

[Narrator] You've been listening to The  
Break Room, a weekly program

addressing projects and  
programs offered by the City of

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week as the city's

communications director Melissa  
Wissel has in-depth

conversations with the people  
who make our town work to meet

the needs of our community. The  
break room is produced

communication specialist for  
the City of Saint Augustine

Cindy Walker see you at this  
time next week for another

edition of The Break Room