



CONTACT:
Fire Chief Dan Brown
(563)589-4160
dbrown@cityofdubuque.org
www.cityofdubuque.org/fire

NEWS RELEASE

October 24, 2011 – For Immediate Release

Cause of Sunday Morning House Fire Determined

DUBUQUE, Iowa – The Dubuque Fire Department has determined that the cause of an accidental fire at a home located at 275 Doe Court early Sunday morning fire was spontaneous combustion due to the improper disposal of a towel soaked with linseed oil.

The Dubuque Fire Department reminds anyone who uses any flammable product such as stain, varnish, linseed oil, and others, to dispose of the product as instructed on the warning label. Most warning labels state to dispose of rags in a water-filled metal can with a tight-fitting lid.

Rags soaked with linseed oil stored in a pile are considered a fire hazard because they provide a large surface area for oxidation of the oil, and the oil oxidizes quickly. The oxidation of linseed oil is an exothermic reaction, which accelerates as the temperature of the rags increases. When heat accumulation exceeds the rate of heat dissipation into the environment, the temperature increases and may eventually become hot enough to make the rags spontaneously combust.

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