

## McTot sticker

# Fire chief objects to decal

By Craig Piechura  
staff writer

There's a difference of opinion between Ronald McDonald and Farmington Hills Fire Chief Larry Karon concerning fire safety.

Karon discourages the practice of placing "Tot Spot" window decals on the bedroom window of rooms where children sleep. McDonald just finished a six-week campaign, aided by public service announcements on television, promoting the stickers.

About 600,000 "Tot Spot" decals were distributed in the restaurant promotion, says Jill Denman, public relations account executive for McDonald's in Michigan. She says the public showed great interest in the program. But Karon doesn't share in the enthusiasm.

He says the decals may confuse firefighters in a time of a fire emergency

rather than aid them. Persons move an average of every five years and an old sticker on a window may bring firefighters to a room that is unoccupied by the new inhabitants.

"It also lets undesirable people — possibly even a child molester — know that a child may be in the room," Karon said.

Burglars may decide to enter a bedroom with such a sticker on an outside window, he claimed, figuring that they're unlikely to encounter physical resistance from a child.

"WE MAKE a systematic search of the premises any time there's a residential fire," Karon said. "Of course, a bedroom is always of utmost consideration in any firefighter's mind in a residential fire."

Noting that not all fire departments support use of the stickers, Denman said reaction to the McDonald's cam-

paign among fire officials has been split "about 50/50 maybe leaning more toward the departments that favor it." The Detroit Fire Department wholeheartedly backed the program, she said, while officials of other departments said they wished they were notified before the advertisements were aired.

"I guess my reaction is, even if they use a systematic approach in looking for persons trapped in a fire, you've got to start somewhere first and it doesn't hurt to go to that bedroom with the sticker first," Denman said.

"If it helps to save one child's life, it's worth it. That's my position."

Farmington Public Safety Director G. Robert Seifert says he understands Karon's objections because the value of the stickers is limited. But, unlike Karon, he doesn't discourage smokers from applying the stickers to their children's bedroom windows.

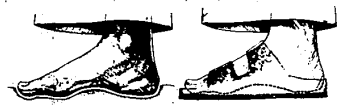
"WE WANT to support any legitimate effort any well-meaning group does to support fire awareness," Seifert says. "The real benefit of a program like this may be that they thought about the possibility of a home fire for the first time and formed an evacuation plan."

Karon supports the practice of families conducting a mock fire emergency with each member of the family finding a way out, including alternative routes if the normal passage is blocked by a blaze.

To avoid confusion in a time of a real emergency, Karon says, family members should agree to meet at a central location outside if there is a fire. This can avoid tragic confusion caused by trips made into burning homes looking for persons who are already safe.

Both he and Seifert strongly endorse the use of top-of-the-line smoke detectors which retail for about \$50.

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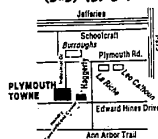
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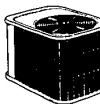
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