

It is unfortunate, I think, that fire safety has received less than its just share of emphasis. As an example, have you ever made a comparison between traffic safety and fire safety insofar as public support is concerned? The whole country is familiar with the magnificent job the many splendid public-spirited groups and agencies are doing in minimizing traffic accidents. But you people of the fire service stand virtually alone in spearheading the effort to reduce the tragic loss of life and property by fire.

Please understand that my interest as Governor of the Free State of Maryland is not to de-emphasize traffic safety. The point I wish to make is that fire safety as a matter of public concern should be brought to a level with traffic safety, with perhaps more emphasis upon both.

Not long ago I came upon some interesting statistics having to do with the loss of life among children. Do you know that more children lose their lives in fires each year than are killed by infantile paralysis, diphtheria, whooping cough, measles and scarlet fever combined? These diseases of childhood are no longer the dread scourges that they were. The medical profession has made amazing advances toward giving our children a chance to grow to a healthy adulthood insofar as the diseases of childhood are concerned. It accomplished this not by prescribing pills and elixirs but by eliminating the cause of the diseases. Why can't we do the same thing in fire safety? Our presence here today indicates an awareness of the fact that this is our responsibility.

Yes, speaking in general terms, we have come a very long way. But we have yet a long way to go.

I would turn now to a more specific discussion of fire safety, and in so doing, I should like to acquaint you with some of the things we have done and are doing in Maryland. Having been a Maryland fireman, I quite naturally know more about fire safety in Maryland than in other states. You will pardon, I am sure, the personal references I shall have to make. I shall try to escape being boastful, but should you get the impression that we in Maryland are proud of our fire service, you will not be wrong in the least bit. I hope a recitation of some of our deeds may serve as an inspiration to others who are trying to build up an efficient, comprehensive firemen's training program.

You have heard Bill Hilgenberg relate some of my background in the fire service. May I say here that the presidency of the Maryland State Firemen's Association is one of my proudest achievements.

I would like in return to pay a sincere tribute to the fire organization