

ADDRESS, GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE  
ON FIRE PREVENTION  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

August 11, 1959

I have asked you to come here to this conference to consider a matter of tremendous significance to all of us—the safety of the lives and property of the people of Maryland.

You have been invited to these discussions because you are highly qualified by experience, training and aptitude to make a valuable contribution to the solution of a problem we face in Maryland and elsewhere. I speak of fire prevention and fire protection. It is our purpose here to give serious, intelligent thought to fire safety, with the hope and expectation that means will be found to strengthen our program of prevention.

High on the list of my objectives as Governor is to give our citizens a greater security against the hazards they encounter daily in their homes, at work and in travel. I should think that most of you have read or heard of our program of traffic safety, which includes the point system for penalizing careless drivers and chemical tests for the operators of motor vehicles accused of drunken driving. These new laws, together with stepped-up enforcement of all the traffic laws in our statute books, we hope will be effective in the reduction of the shocking rate of deaths and injuries through accidents on our highways.

We hear and read much about traffic safety. Traffic safety is widely promoted and highly publicized. The same cannot be said of fire safety, for one reads and hears little about the number of lives lost and the amount of property destroyed in fires. This, I think, is most unfortunate . . . .

Fire statistics in Maryland are not quite so spectacular and hair-raising as are the figures on traffic mishaps. Ninety-two persons died in fires in the State last year, as compared with the 505 highway accident fatalities. But we cannot, in good conscience, be complacent about the deaths of 92 persons in fires which could have been, and should have been, prevented. During the fall, winter and early spring months especially, one reads in newspapers too frequently of entire families being wiped out by fires.

The State Insurance Commissioner F. Douglass Sears, I am informed, soon will issue a report stating that the total insured property loss from fires in Maryland last year was \$10,958,000. That, we may be thankful,