

# St. George Men Train Hard in Fire Prevention

Last February fire at St. George on the Pribilof Islands trapped a family in an upstairs apartment and claimed nine lives.

Most of the dead were children.

To prevent fire from ever again taking a toll in lives or property on the island St. George's volunteer firemen have undertaken a vigorous training program so they can fight fires more effectively and—more important—prevent future blazes.

Last week the state Fire Marshall, Robert Crouse, and two state assistant Fire Mar-

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# St. George Training in Fire Prevention . . .

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shalls, Andre Schalk and Wally Dawson, paid a four-day visit to the island to train St. George's firemen.

Dawson, now in Fairbanks giving lessons to university volunteers, said of the Pribilof men: "I was certainly surprised to see how alert they are. They're really a fine bunch."

"Nick Melovidov, fire chief at St. George, was really doing a fine job. We inspected buildings with them—hospitals, warehouses, homes, and then we took the volunteers and taught them fire-fighting tactics."

Not only the volunteers took part in the instruction, Dawson said, but also as many people from the village itself as wanted to come.

"We had quite a turnout," Dawson commented.

Although manpower for fighting fires is available, equipment is scarce for the Pribilof volunteers.

"They don't have much but they keep up what they do have," Dawson said. "Just recently the first gas mask for the crew arrived."

"Although there may be more on order, that one mask is all we had to train with out there. Each of the men took turns using the mask, learning how to use it."

Buildings for setting "controlled burn" demonstration fires for training were also scarce.

"Usually we just find an old building in a village to use for a purpose like this. But there just aren't any "old buildings" on the islands—everything is in use and, I might add, in good condition."

"We finally just set a small fire in an oil drum inside one shed to train the men with the gas masks."

Last February's tragic fire that claimed eight children and one adult resulted when the wooden stairway leading to one of many second-story buildings was burned by flames. The family had no way to escape.

Since then, Dawson said, alternate escape stairways are being put up to the second-story homes.

"It's always tragic. It always seems that three-quarters of the victims are children."