



EPHRATA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Position Statement

Child & Disabled Person Locator Decals *aka "Tot Finder" Stickers*

February 2008

Aligned with the position of the Washington Public Fire Educators, the Ephrata Fire Department has determined that child and disabled persons locator decals (such as "Tot Finder" window stickers) are not reliable means of ensuring the safety of the young or the mobility-impaired in the event of fire.

BACKGROUND Firefighters are specially trained and equipped to make a thorough and systematic search for anyone trapped inside a burning building.

Whenever firefighters are summoned to a building fire, their first action upon arrival is to verify that all occupants are safe – and to initiate rescue efforts if they are not. By utilizing the window decal system, critical time could be lost as firefighters look for decals that may no longer be accurate.

The Ephrata Fire Department continues to recommend the following steps to protect families – including children and disabled persons – in the event of fire:

- Install and maintain working smoke alarms/detectors on all levels of the home and in each sleeping area.
- Develop a home fire escape plan.
- Practice the escape plan with all members of the household twice a year.
- Install a residential fire sprinkler system in the home.

VITAL POINTS Ephrata Fire Department discourages the use of child/invalid window decals for the following reasons:

- There is no standardized, endorsed type of sticker.
- Decals can alert a burglar or other intruder that an easy entry can be made into the home. A child or disabled person may offer little or no resistance.
- The average family moves every five years. When a house changes hands, room occupants change. As a family grows, the use of rooms may also change. If the decals are not moved, they become meaningless.
- Occupants may be in another part of the house when the fire first occurs, or move about while trying to escape.
- Decals may give a false sense of security (i.e. leading people to believe there is no need to have a family escape plan, escape ladders, etc.)