

A *Risk Watch*® Success for McKinney Fire Department *McTown Klownz* Program

On the evening of May 8, 2007, Alex Talton and his brother were in bed asleep while Mom and Dad were downstairs watching the weather that was rolling into the area. There were severe weather and flash flood warnings for Collin County and a spectacular lightening storm was occurring outside the safety of their home. At approximately 11:45, Mr. Russell Talton, Alex's dad, reports hearing a "very loud BOOM!" and begin smelling smoke. He immediately thought of his children upstairs asleep. He frantically ran around the house looking for smoke or fire but saw nothing. He then ran back upstairs to the hatch of the attic and found smoke and flames engulfing it! Knowing he did not have a smoke alarm in the attic, he knew he needed to get his family out and quickly. While his wife called 911, he closed the door of the attic. He and his wife then woke up Aaron and Alex and they all exited the home together.

It was storming badly outside and the family had nothing with them but the pajamas they were wearing. When Mr. Talton realized that the fire appeared to be limited to the attic space, he told Alex to run back inside and grab his shoes that were just inside the front door. Alex immediately stopped and said "NO! The firefighters told me I should never go back inside when there is a fire!" Mr. Talton tried to convince Alex that it was OK, that the fire "was not that bad" and that it would not hurt to just go right inside the front door to grab his shoes. Alex absolutely refused, once again stating that the "firefighters told him (he) would get hurt and to NEVER go back inside-to get out and stay out!" Firefighters arrived on scene moments later to find the family all safely outside the home, and the attic space fully involved with fire.

It took almost two hours to extinguish and overhaul the fire that was caused by the lightening. There was significant damage to the roof, attic and second story of the home.

When interviewing Alex, he said the *McTown Klownz* came to his school, Minshew Elementary, this year and last year, during the month of October.

Both times they talked about what you should do in case of a fire in your home. He knew that the smoke alarms did not go off at the time of the fire, because his Mom and Dad instead woke him up screaming “the house is on fire!” He proudly reported he did not need to crawl low because there was no smoke inside his bedroom or on the way out of his house. His family got out safely together.

When interviewing Alex’s dad, Mr. Talton, he appeared extremely embarrassed for not knowing that what he was asking Alex to do might have harmed him. He stated that he was never taught those things when he was in school. Since then, Alex has made sure that his dad knows all there is to know about fire safety, including the need for a fire escape plan and drill for his family, a fire escape ladder for his bedroom, a smoke alarm in the attic and most importantly the dangers of going back inside a building that is on fire. Mr. Talton stated that he learned a lot from Alex and is thankful that the firefighters care enough about the children of McKinney to take the time to teach them about Fire & Life Safety.