



Left, center and above: Crockett Auto Parts, Montpelier, Idaho, following the disaster.

It's a disaster that no store owner wants to think about, but it happens: Fire.

Within twelve days of each other two stores serviced out of the NAPA Salt Lake City Distribution Center were destroyed by fire last summer. The following accounts explain the uncontrollable circumstances surrounding each of the fires, how the wheels of recovery were set into motion, and shares some advice from each of the jobbers involved as to what other jobbers should be aware of . . . just in case.

Crockett Auto Parts, Montpelier, Idaho

John Crockett's business, Crockett Auto Parts, was located adjacent to a plastic and fiberglass manufacturing firm in Montpelier, Idaho. On the evening of August 9, 1982, an explosion in the manufacturing company sent the building up in flames. Fearing toxic fumes, local authorities spent the night evacuating the entire town; John Crockett and his wife, Kate, left with the rest of the population.

When the Crocketts returned the next morning, they were shocked; although their building was still standing, the entire center of the store had caved in, crushed by tons of brick and water as the burned out manufacturing company collapsed onto their store.

The NAPA Salt Lake City Distribution Center and the insurance company were immediately notified. Within a few hours of the town being opened again to the public, the D.C. had two factory representatives at the store to provide an on-site report. Based on their assessment, by the evening of August 10 a D.C. truck carrying Crockett's new inventory was en route to Montpelier, along with a caravan of 26 D.C. and factory representatives. The first task was difficult — locating and obtaining a suitable vacant building in which to set up the new Crockett Auto Parts store. This accomplished, the crew set about cleaning

the building in preparation for the arrival of the inventory. They succeeded — on August 13, three days from the first on-site report — Crockett's Auto Parts was back in business at its new location.

Ephraim Auto Parts, Ephraim Utah

On the afternoon of Friday, August 20th — one week after John Crockett was back in business — the call came into the NAPA Salt Lake City Distribution Center: NAPA Jobber Jim Sharpe's store in Ephraim was in flames.

Apparently, a motor home had pulled up next to the store to fill up at a fuel pump. When the hose was pulled underneath the vehicle, heat from the exhaust pipe ignited the fumes from the nozzle — and the fire was on. Flames burst into Ephraim Auto Parts, traveled through the paint room and into the sales area.

As the D.C. had already scheduled a weekend meeting for all factory representatives, it was decided that a work crew would be assembled at the meeting. A suitable inventory — enough to get the business back on its feet — was also assembled.

On Monday morning, five D.C. personnel and 12 factory representatives were at the site of the fire. But their report was disheartening; no suitable buildings were available in Ephraim in which to set up the new inventory. As time is a crucial factor in getting a business back into operation, the crew decided to work with what was available. They completely cleaned out the existing Ephraim Auto Parts, painting, patching and repairing as needed.

On August 25, five days after the fire and three days after the NAPA work crew arrived on site, Jim Sharpe's Ephraim Auto Parts was back in business.

What If . . .

When asked what a jobber should do in the face of such a disaster, or what preventative measures could be taken to minimize losses and facilitate the insurance settlement, John Crockett and Jim Sharpe had the following recommendations.

If It Happens:

1. In the event that such a disaster strikes your store, immediately notify both your NAPA Distribution Center and your insurance company.
2. Do not disturb the scene until the insurance adjuster has had an opportunity to investigate the site and make his determination.
3. Make sure the first thing salvaged is the card desk. This is the lifeblood of the store and is absolutely necessary to settle the insurance claim properly.
4. The insurance adjuster will want to know the cause of the fire and the dollar amount of inventory, furniture, fixtures and miscellaneous items.
5. Be prepared to discuss with the insurance adjuster possible future warranty problems on certain products. It's advisable to have a representative from your NAPA Distribution Center on hand when such warranty questions arise.

Preventative Measures:

1. Maintain an accurate, current inventory record at all times. Periodically review your insurance policies to make sure your coverage is keeping up with the value and size of the stock in your store. Be certain your insurance policy covers the actual, current value of the store — not what it was worth several years ago. This is important; your new inventory will have to be covered by your insurance policy.
2. Keep the card desk in the most fireproof, least potential hazardous spot in the store. The same holds true with your customer accounts receivable records. (John Crockett and Jim Sharpe were fortunate in that both fires spared the card desks; this not only facilitated the quick renewal of their inventories, but was also necessary for the insurance settlements.)
3. And last but not least: Keep track of vacant buildings in your area. You never know . . . one of them may someday have to house your store.

Left: Ephraim Auto Parts, Ephraim, Utah.