Fire Safety at Home Meeting Kit



Fire Danger in and Around your Home

Most fires happen where we feel safest – our homes. But everyone can act to prevent and to survive fires. **Working smoke alarms and a practiced home escape plan** provide the best protection in a home fire. In most fires, you have as little as 3 minutes to escape once the smoke alarm sounds.

CAUSES OF FIRES AND FIRE DEATHS

Cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. It is also the leading cause of home fire injuries. Cooking fires often result from unattended cooking and human error, rather than mechanical failure of stoves or ovens.

Careless Smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths. Smoke alarms and smolder-resistant bedding and upholstered furniture are significant fire deterrents.

Heating is the Second Leading cause of residential fires and the second leading cause of fire deaths. However, heating fires are a larger problem in single-family homes than in apartments. Unlike apartments, the heating systems in single-family homes are often not professionally maintained.

Arson is Both the Third Leading Cause of residential fires and residential fire deaths. In commercial properties, arson is the major cause of deaths, injuries and dollar loss.

SAFETY TIPS TO PREVENT HOUSE FIRES

1. **Check your Smoke Detectors**

Fire and smoke detectors are your first line of defense against danger. When smoke and heat enter that little device on your wall, the sensors inside sound the alarm. This means you can catch the problem before it becomes an emergency. So be sure to keep your smoke and fire detectors in good condition.

Install smoke alarms on away floor and in every bedroom.

Test every month

Get in the habit of testing your smoke and fire detectors once a month. It only takes a few minutes to test them, and it can save your home in an emergency.

Ask a partner (your kids, spouse, or roommate) to listen for the alarm in a faraway room. The smoke detector may be working, but it isn't helpful if the whole house can't hear it. Do this for each smoke detector in your home once a month to keep them in good shape.

Change the batteries as needed

When the batteries in smoke alarms are low, you'll know. Those annoying chirps every few minutes aren't just for fun. They're low-battery alerts and they shouldn't be ignored. If a fire breaks out in your home and the smoke detector's batteries are drained, the alarm won't sound, putting your home at a higher risk.

2. **Watch your Appliances**

Appliances like stoves and washing machines make daily life a lot easier, but they can also pose a fire hazard. According to the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), half of house fires start in the kitchen.

In the kitchen

With so many appliances in one place, it deserves a little extra attention.

When it's time to get cooking, be sure your oven, stove, and any hot plates are far away from flammable items like curtains, rags, or chemicals. Don't leave the room unattended if you can help it. And keep a fire extinguisher on hand in the kitchen in case of grease fires or other emergencies.

Sleeping areas

Start by taking a look at your mattress to make sure it contains flame-retardant chemicals inside. For extra protection, consider a flame-retardant mattress cover.

Good habits and smart fire safety practices can help prevent fires in the bedroom too. Electric blankets, smoking in bed, space heaters, and overloaded wall sockets are all hazards in the bedroom. If you smoke, take it outside. Only use electric blankets with automatic shut off abilities. And avoid overloading wall sockets and power strips with too many plugs.

The living room

If you have a fireplace, your living room or den may be a hot spot for fire hazards. Keep the stove or fireplace clean and clear of debris or flammable items (even when not in use). Having a Christmas tree near the fire sounds cozy, but it can be seriously dangerous without proper precautions.

When using your fireplace, keep the glass windows open and the metal screen shut. This allows air to enter the fireplace but keeps embers from jumping onto your floors. Use fire-safe tools like iron pokers to move around any logs inside. Never use your hands.

The laundry room

The laundry room seems like an odd place for fire hazards until you remember that dryer lint is flammable. When it comes to common places in your home for fires to start, the laundry room sees its fair share. These high-powered appliances can overheat, especially if the vents aren't cleared out regularly.

Garage and outside

Grills, bonfires, and fireworks are obvious culprits for outside and backyard fires. Fertilizer and some brands of potting soil contain flammable materials that can combust under heat or after someone ashes a cigarette.

Store your gardening supplies in a cool, dry area.

Whether it’s the grill or the summer sun, keep flammable products away from heat. Designate a cool, dark cupboard for flammable products and make sure all family members know where they go.

Keep combustible materials like paint and gasoline in their original containers. Store tightly closed paint containers upside down so the paint creates a seal. Gasoline should be stored in containers designed for gasoline. If a container develops a crack or leak, transfer its contents into a new container made of the same material as the original.

FINAL WORD

The best way to avoid a fire in the home is to take action towards preventing one. Follow the prevention measures mentioned above. The next best thing to do is to be prepared if there is fire in the home. Having a plan and practicing that plan can keep your family safe during a fire situation.