

# FIRE SAFETY

“The United States has one of the highest fire death and injury rates in the world,” according to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission. There are 500,000+ fires in residences every year. This Commission lists the principal causes of fires. Some are:

- Home heating devices
- Upholstered furniture
- Cigarettes lighters, and matches



The principal culprit is cigarettes. The Commission is one of the principal backers of smoke detectors in homes, due in large part to the issue of cigarettes. Smoking in bed is one of the largest causes of fires.

All concerned with fire safety realize that awareness of fire-causes is a crucial step to preventing them.

## Home Heating Equipment

*Kerosene heaters.* These common devices require:

- The correct fuel – never gasoline
- Must be located out of traffic areas in the house
- Require well ventilated rooms
- Are never left running when the family is sleeping
- Must be 3’ distant from any other object in the room
- Must never be refilled while still ‘on’.



*Portable electric heaters.*

- Turn off when going to bed at night
- Position on the floor, never on a table or furniture
- Use NO extension cord
- Place 3’ away from any combustible object
- Do not use for drying clothing of any type.

## Cooking Equipment



An estimated 100,000+ fires yearly are due to cooking equipment.

Recommendations include:

- Pay attention to clothing worn while cooking. Loose sleeves catch fire, tip over pots and are a potential problem.
- Store only non-combustible items above the stove
- Don’t put anything above the stove that would interest a child, especially treats or items that he/she might like to play with, etc. Children climb.
- Do not store pot holders, towels, plastic items near the stove.
- Do not leave the stove unattended when it’s in use.

## Cigarette Lighters & Matches

Small children, under age 5, are the most frequent victims of fires started by lighters or matches.

- Never use a lighter to amuse a child
  - Keep matches out of sight & out of reach of children
  - Make sure that stubs are really 'out' when emptying ash trays.
- A lingering spark will ignite trash.



## Materials that burn.

*Upholstered furniture.* Anything in your home can burn, however furniture is frequently involved in home fires because of people who smoke in the house. It's up to you to check carefully that no cigarette butt, no ashes, no cigar or pipe tobacco fell between cushions or under tables or chairs. Your vigilance will prevent a slow igniting flame from causing harm or worse to your family after guests have left the house.

*Mattresses, bedding.* Do not smoke in bed. Simple rule but it's a life-saver.

In addition, place any portable heaters at least 3' away from the bed.

*Flammable liquids.* Storage is the problem. Do not place kerosene, gasoline or cleaning solvents anywhere near your furnace or water heater. Cans for these liquids have to be vented, and those fumes will connect with the flame in your home appliances and ignite. Children should not have access to these combustible liquids either. Outside storage is the best idea, but take precautions on access.



## Home Safety & Fires.

The first line of defense against home fires is the smoke detector. These are located on each floor of the house. Specifically they are placed in every bedroom; the 2nd floor hallway unit is a Carbon Monoxide detector also. If you have a basement, there is one near the steps. Detectors work in two ways: first, they are wired to the electrical system in the house; second, they have a battery back up system. Smoke detectors thus work whether the electrical system goes out or not. However it is your responsibility to put fresh batteries into the detectors each year. If you forget, the detector starts beeping when its battery gets weak and hopefully annoys you enough to make you get a new battery in place. Note: it's very hard to determine which battery is weak/dead in which smoke detector because all the detectors in the system beep when one battery goes dead. Replacing all the batteries is your only practical option.



Manufacturers recommend that you test the detector regularly by pushing the button or other mechanism to sound the alarm.

Smoke detectors are part of every new or rehabbed home; they are required by the fire code. Enjoy the protection that these offer you, remove the dust with your vacuum, and stock up on batteries.

The final issue in protecting your family & yourself concerns an **escape plan**. If your family members are all young adult or older, review the steps for getting out of the house quickly from every room. This should include the basic escape route: getting promptly to the nearest door from anywhere in the house.

Then discuss the **alternate route**: when fire blocks the obvious exit and the person must consider a window, even if he/she is on the second floor. Talk through this since there may be issues of height-fear, etc.



***If your family includes young children***, put aside any hesitation you might feel about making them insecure in their new home. Remember: your children are all exposed to fire-safety-education in their schools and they will understand why you are talking to them about this issue.

Establish the obvious escape path out of the house from every room. Rehearse it.

Consider teaching them an alternate escape route, should the fire block the doors: going out a window, climbing an adjoining roof, etc. but only if you think they can absorb such information.



Then go over the steps for escaping a night-time fire. Both daytime or night fires may include these actions. Night fires add the difficulties of people being asleep and the fire not getting noticed as early. Consider the following for them to do:

Yelling FIRE as loudly as they can to alert other family members

Trying to wake sleeping siblings (but allowing that they may fail to do so)

Crawling to the exit if there is a lot of smoke (review why they must crawl)

Never hiding under the bed or in their closet

Getting out of the house as quickly as possible

Not stopping to find favorite teddy bears or toys

Making sure that Mommy or Daddy are wakened (or you may want them to forgo this step since it will delay their exit)

Going to the pre-arranged meeting spot; ***very important!***

Waking their neighbor

Calling 911 on a cell phone or from a neighbor's phone, but NOT from the phone in their own house

Not going back into the house for important items

Waiting for the fire department to arrive; telling one of these men or women about anyone who might still be inside the house.

