

Fire Prevention

GUIDE



Pay Attention to Danger Zones

House fires can spread rapidly, leaving you two minutes or less to escape safely once an alarm sounds.

That is not a lot of time if you have multiple people or pets to account for, so being prepared can make the difference between survival and injuries, or even death. According to the National Fire Protection Agency, a fire department responds to a fire every 24 seconds in the United States. The NFPA says the biggest fire starters include smoking materials, cooking, heating equipment, candles and arson.

SMOKING RELATED

Cigarettes are the leading cause of fatal fires, causing 700 to 900 deaths each year on average. Carelessly discarded smoking materials can quickly ignite trash, bedding or furniture. Most smoking-related fires start in the living room, family room or den.

Lit cigarette butts can also cause wildfires, especially during dry, hot seasons.

According to Keep America Beautiful, the rate of improper cigarette butt disposal is 65% a third of all roadway litter in the United States. Always use an ashtray to put out cigarettes.

COOKING EQUIPMENT

Cooking equipment is the leading cause of home fires



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and injuries in home fires. These types of fires typically occur when a hot stove is left unattended. At least two-thirds of these fires involve the range, especially the cooktop, and two-thirds of home cooking fires start within the first 15 minutes of cooking. Avoid distractions when cooking by

only focusing on the task at hand. Leaving the room to fold laundry or make a phone call can lead to a fire.

HEATING EQUIPMENT

Heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires and third leading cause of home

fire deaths. About 66% of heating-related fires are linked to improperly used space heaters. The NFPA classifies space heaters as fireplaces, fixed and portable space heaters, and wood stoves. While giving your home heat during the chillier months is important, even more so is under-

standing how to use this type of equipment. To start, it's critical that you operate these heating elements with plenty of space and away from any combustible materials. Always read the owner's manual for each heater to get a good grasp on proper usage, maintenance and repair.



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How to Survive a Fire

Surviving a fire takes a well-executed plan that you have practiced multiple times.

Fire is dangerous, but smoke may be your biggest challenge in an emergency situation. That's because it can cause you to pass out or seriously damage your lungs. Every second is precious when it comes to surviving a fire in your home or office.

Incorporate these tips into your

home or office fire emergency plan today.

STAY COOL

If facing a fire at your home or office, there are steps you can take to stay cool under pressure. The best way to remain calm is to understand your emergency plan. Work with your children to make sure they know where to go and what to do if a fire breaks out. If you run a business, your employees should have a grasp of where emergency exits are in the building. Practice drills both at home and the office to

keep everyone in the know in case disaster strikes.

STAY LOW

When a fire ignites, rooms fill up with smoke quickly. Your exit path will likely be blocked with smoke, so it's crucial that you avoid breathing it in. Cover your nose and mouth as you escape. Smoke rises, so stay low to the floor. Get on your hands and knees. Crawl toward the door. This will improve your chances of surviving the fire while also minimizing your exposure to dangerous smoke.

DOOR SAFETY

Things can be dark and confusing during a fire. As you pass from one room to another, remember to close doors behind you. This helps prevent the fire from spreading any faster. If you have to open an interior door to escape, be sure to look for any smoke that might be coming through the cracks.

Feel the door for heat. If the door is hot, there is likely a fire raging on the other side. If the door feels normal, open it a crack and move through the room.

A Great Escape Plan

The National Fire Prevention Association recommends families work together to create an escape plan that can keep them safe in the face of danger.

There are multiple facets to a great escape plan, including your pre-drill, drill and post-drill action steps. Read on for an easy way to make sure your family is ready to react if a fire disaster were to strike.

PRE-DRILL

Before performing your drill, take these steps to ensure a solid plan.

Walk through the home to inspect all possible exits and escape routes.

Draw a floor plan of the home.

Mark two clear routes out of each

room, including windows and doors.

Ensure your smoke alarms are strategically placed outside of bedrooms, inside the kitchen, and inside laundry rooms.

Make sure your windows have release devices inside to ensure they can be opened immediately in the event of an emergency.

DRILL

It is vital that you run through periodic drills to ensure all members of the family understand the plan. Pick a day when all of your family members are home.

Have your family members take their positions in their own beds.

Sound one of your smoke alarms to begin your drill.

Encourage your family members to move quickly through your home, feeling doors for heat and staying low to the floor to avoid rising smoke.

Practice closing doors on your way out

of the home; a closed door will help slow the spread of the fire.

Select and convene at your outside meeting place (such as a neighbor's house or mailbox).

Take mental notes during your drill so you can address any potential flaws in your escape plan.

POST-DRILL

Once your drill is complete, sit down at the table to discuss your family's performance.

Encourage questions from your children to ensure they are clear on all the details of your escape plan.

Offer positive feedback and critique any behavior that went against your escape plan; it's important to save this information for after the drill to prevent slowing down your practice evacuation.

If you have security cameras within your home, you can also record your drill and watch it back as a family.

Maintaining Smoke Detectors

According to the National Fire Protection Association, three out of five home fire deaths result from fires in buildings without working smoke alarms, and 37% of home fire deaths result from fires in which no smoke alarms are present.

Alarms typically detect smoke before a sleeping person would and allow additional time to escape before the flames take over a home, so their maintenance is key to fire survival.

PLACEMENT AND TESTING

Officials recommend homeowners install a smoke alarm in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of a home, including the basement. This is to protect your family from fires that may start in unsuspecting areas, as well as to give your home a shield of protection if it spans multiple levels. Smoke alarms should be installed on either the ceiling, or as high as possible on a wall. Installation is a simple process, but if you're unsure of how to install smoke detectors, ask a friend or family member with experience doing so. To ensure smoke alarms are functioning properly, the NFPA



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recommends checking each alarm at least once per month by pressing the test button typically found on the front of the device. Check the owner's guide to understand what sounds you're looking for during testing.

KNOW YOUR DETECTOR

There are several different

types of smoke alarms, and experts recommend using both ionization smoke alarms and photoelectric alarms. Ionization alarms are typically quicker to recognize flaming fires, while photoelectric alarms typically react faster to smoldering fires.

In recent years, interconnected fire alarms that trigger

every alarm in the house have become popular and are recommended by the NFPA. Alarms powered from your home's electrical system usually have a back-up battery that need to be replaced yearly.

New smoke alarm products can be accessed via the Internet to keep a constant check on your home. Officials

say these newer devices can provide an extra level of security and connectivity to monitor potential fires, giving you peace of mind even when you are away from home.

Some fire departments offer reduced-price or free smoke alarms. Contact your local fire department's non-emergency line for more information.

Protecting your Business

As a business owner, you want your focus to be on generating revenue, not building codes and regulations. You recognize, however, that the safety of your employees and the integrity of your building are critical to running a successful company.

There are more than 3,000 fires in office properties per year, according to the National Fire Protection Association. These fires lead to expensive property loss, extended recovery time and even employee death or injury. When it comes to fire prevention, it's up to you to make sure your business is safe and protected.

STAY IN COMPLIANCE

Keep your facilities up to code with fire regulations. Use a local professional to inspect your electrical equipment regularly, keeping an eye out for damaged or fraying cords or circuits that are overloaded. The easiest way to stay in code is to have a strong understanding of compliance. Study your city and state building regulations to keep abreast of any changing specifications.

INSTALL SPRINKLER SYSTEM

Water is a fire's worst enemy. By installing a high-quality sprinkler system throughout your business, you can be confident in stopping a fire before it gets out of hand. Use a local provider to ensure proper installation and regular maintenance. Make sure the con-

tractor understands building codes and regulations to avoid any violations down the road. Don't forget to alert your insurance company when you finish the installation, as this can help lower your property insurance premiums.

FIRE ALARM SYSTEM

Make sure that your office

building is equipped with a quality fire alarm system and smoke detectors. This is key to keeping your employees safe and alerting your local fire department if a fire breaks out. Also keep plenty of fire extinguishers on hand. Make sure that your employees know where they are located in case a fire pops up.

CLEAR EXITS

Your business should have emergency lighting and signage that shows people where to exit the building. All exits should be clearly marked.

Work with your local regulators to make sure you're up to code and properly protecting your employees from harm's way.



Wildfire Preparedness Tips

When you think of dangerous fires, your mind likely associates them with your home, office or other structures. But wildfires have become a devastating force of nature leaving millions of people displaced or evacuated from their homes.

Nearly 45 million homes abut or intermingle with wildlands and more than 72,000 U.S. communities are now at risk of wildfires, according to the National Fire Protection Association. But how do you know if you fall into this category?

One way to know is to contact your local planning and zoning office to find out if your home is in a wildfire risk area, and if there are specific local or county ordinances you should be following.

If you are part of a homeowners association, work collaboratively to identify regulations that incorporate preparedness landscaping, home design and building material use.

You can also talk to your local fire department about how to prepare and when to evacuate in the event of a wildfire. The more prepared you and your neighbors are, the



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better chance you'll have of avoiding injury during a wildfire.

SAFETY TIPS

Here are some preparedness tips from the NFPA:

To prevent embers from igniting your home, clear leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and

decks.

Remove dead vegetation and other items from under your deck or porch, and within 10 feet of the house.

Remove flammable materials within 30 feet of your home's foundation and outbuildings.

Wildfires can spread to tree tops, so prune your trees so

the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.

Keep your lawn hydrated and maintained, as dry grass and shrubs are fuel for wildfire.

STAY ALERT

Wildfires generate media attention, so stay tuned to your local news stations for the latest updates on wildfire activity.

If your neighborhood or region is under an evacuation order, be sure to follow the guidance of your local officials. The NFPA recommends leaving as early as possible, even before you're told to evacuate. Promptly leaving your home and neighborhood clears roads for firefighters to get equipment in place to fight the fire.

Holiday Fires by the Numbers

The holiday season is one of the most dangerous times of the year for home fires.

Consider the following statistics about the dangers.

- Nearly 47,000 fires occur during the winter holidays claiming more than 500 lives, causing more than 2,200 injuries, and costing \$554 million in property damage (U.S. Fire Administration).

- On average, one of every 22 home fires started by Christmas trees result in death (National Fire Protection Association).

- Candle fires are four times as likely to occur during the winter holidays (U.S. Fire Administration).

- During the winter holiday season, an average of 40 home fires per day are caused by children playing (U.S. Fire Administration).

- The number of home fires the American Red Cross has responded to has risen 10% since 2000 (American Red Cross).

- Having a working smoke alarm reduces one's chances of dying in a fire by nearly half (U.S. Fire Administration).

So what can you do this holiday season to make sure your home is protected from fire? Here are some helpful tips from the American Red Cross:

Place Christmas trees, candles and other decorations at least three feet away from



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heat sources.

If you purchase a real tree, make sure that it has fresh, green needles that aren't easily broken. Water frequently to prevent your tree from drying out.

Always unplug your tree and holiday lights before leav-

ing the home or going to bed.

Use only sturdy tree stands designed to not tip over. Keep pets and children away from Christmas trees.

Never use lit candles to decorate a tree; always extinguish candles before leaving the room or going to bed.

When cooking, keep pot holders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, bags and food packaging away from your stove top.

Designate someone to walk around your home to make sure all candles and smoking materials are properly extin-

guished before leaving the home.

Install a smoke alarm near your kitchen, on each level of your home and near sleeping areas. Use the test button to check your alarms each month and replace your batteries at least once per year.