

## Fire Prevention

Having a fire in your home can be a devastating experience. Preventing fires and being prepared to react to a fire in your home play vital roles in you and your family's safety. Below are a few tips to help you prepare for and prevent fires in your home and workplace.

### **How to prepare for and react to a fire in your home**

- Locate two escape routes from each room - first the door, and second a window. If you have a second story, consider buying fire escape ladders.
  - As you exit, close all doors behind you to slow the spread of the fire and smoke.
  - If an exit is blocked by smoke or fire, use your second exit to escape. If you must escape through smoke, stay low and crawl under the smoke to safety. Crawl on your hands and knees, not your belly, because heavier poisons will settle in a thin layer along the floor.
  - If you live in a high-rise building, use the stairs. NEVER use an elevator in case of fire.
  - Choose a meeting place a safe distance from your home and make sure every member of the family knows to meet there.
  - Make sure the street number or address of your home is visible to responding firefighters.
  - Once outside, call 9-1-1 immediately from the nearest phone, or use a portable or cellular phone you can grab quickly on the way out.
  - Practice your escape drill at least twice a year.
  - NEVER go back inside a burning building!! Once you are out and safe, stay out!
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### **Smoke Detectors**

Fire spreads very rapidly. Most of the injuries and deaths that occur due to a fire are actually caused by people breathing the smoke and toxic gases rather than the fire itself. Ensuring that your home has adequate smoke detectors and proper placement throughout your home is critical to your safety and chances for survival. Smoke detectors, when properly installed and maintained (following manufacturer's directions), provide early warning when a fire occurs. Early warning increases your chances for survival by allowing you and your family to escape as early as possible, and allows the fire department to save more of your property.

**Proper placement and maintenance of your smoke detector is very important.**

- At least one smoke detector should be installed on each floor of your home. It's a good idea to be sure that there is one near each bedroom.

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- Install detectors either on the ceiling or 6-12 inches below the ceiling on the wall.
- Keep them away from air vents.
- Clean and test detectors according to manufacturer's instructions. Be sure that the grills are clean so they can detect smoke as early as possible.
- Monthly testing is recommended. Even if month testing isn't a standard in your house, fire departments across the country recommend that batteries in smoke detectors be changed twice each year when daylight savings time begins in the spring and ends in the fall.
- Educate your children regarding what a smoke detector is, how to recognize the alarm and how to escape if it goes off. Develop an escape plan and review the plan with all members of the family frequently. Be aware that children and elderly people may need special assistance should fire occur. Establish a meeting place outside the house for all members of the family to insure that everyone got out safely. When fire occurs, get out of the house and use a neighbor's telephone to notify the fire department.
- Replace batteries with new ones if the detector makes a chirping sound. Many people assume a smoke detector will "chirp" as the battery reaches the end of its useful life. Many do, but some don't. For this reason, smoke detector batteries should be changed regularly whether they need it or not.
- If you have a smoke detector directly wired into your electrical system, be sure that the little signal light is blinking periodically. This tells you that the alarm is active.
- If your smoke detector sounds when no smoke is present, consult with the manufacturer or with your local fire department. If smoke from cooking materials causes the detector to sound an alarm, do not remove the batteries or disconnect the power source. Simply fan the smoke away from the detector until the alarm stops. If this happens frequently, it may be necessary to relocate the detector or to install a different type of detector.
- Replace your smoke detectors if they do not operate properly.

The Fire District may be able to provide you with smoke detectors if you do not have them. We are always willing to come out and help homeowners install detectors if needed. Give us a call at 318-255-1055 if you need assistance.

*IF YOUR SMOKE DETECTOR DOESN'T WORK PROPERLY, THE SILENCE...COULD BE DEADLY.*

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## **Kitchen Fire Safety Tips**

Unattended cooking continues to be a major cause of fire throughout the country. Every year many people are injured and killed in fires in the home. Here are a few safety tips to keep you and your family from being a fire statistic.

### **Grease Fires**

If you are cooking with oil or grease and it ignites, **DO NOT throw water on the fire**. DO NOT attempt to remove the pan.

- Turn the burner off if you can reach it safely.
- Smother the fire with a pan lid.
- Do not carry the burning pan or fryer to the kitchen sink or outdoors.
- If a chemical extinguisher is near and you know how to use it, use the extinguisher to put out the fire.
- If that does not work, evacuate the house and call 9-1-1.

### **General Kitchen Safety Tips**

- Keep the stovetop clean and clear. Keep all appliances free of grease buildup. Wipe up spills and routinely clean the oven. Move combustible items such as oven mitts and utensils away from heat sources.
- Keep children away from appliances when cooking. Create a "kid-free zone" around the stove, and teach children not to play in that area. If you allow older children to cook, supervise them closely and teach them safe cooking practices.
- Remember to turn all pot handles inward. Small children and animals can easily bump a pot handle spilling hot grease or boiling water, causing someone to be burned or start a fire.
- Always keep an eye on food being heated. Do not leave the kitchen while you are cooking.
- If you have to leave the kitchen, turn the stove off or take something like a spoon or oven mitt to remind yourself of the food on the stove.
- Pay attention. Never cook if you are sleepy, intoxicated, or under heavy medication.
- Dress appropriately for cooking. Wear short or tight fitting sleeves when cooking. Use caution when working near heat sources.
- Keep pets away from the stove.
- Try not to reach over the stove for other items. Do not store items above or behind the stove that are combustible or may cause you to burn yourself as you reach for them.
- Be careful around the sink while using electrical appliances. Electrical appliances near water could cause electrocution. Never stand in or near water while using an electrical appliance.
- Heat cooking oil slowly. Carefully monitor hot oil, keeping the pan lid close at hand.
- Keep appliances in proper working order. Do not use them if they are defective.

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- Check regularly for frayed or damaged cords to appliances. Plug one appliance in a receptacle at a time. If you need to plug more appliances into a receptacle than there are plugs, use a surge protector or have a professional electrician install more receptacles.
  - Keep appliance cords as short as possible. This helps to keep from tripping or knocking the appliance over.
  - If a fire should start in your oven, simply close the door and turn off the heat. If the flames do not go out, call the fire department.
  - If you have a fire in your microwave oven, do not open the door. Close the door to the microwave if you do open it and unplug it immediately. Do not use the microwave again until it has been inspected and repaired by a competent service technician.
  - Never put metallic objects in the microwave oven. These materials cause sparks, which may result in a fire.
  - Remember that steam escaping from a pan or container can cause severe burns. Open food that has been cooked in the microwave carefully.
  - Place hot dishes on center of table or counter, not close to the edge.
  - Keep an ABC dry chemical fire extinguisher near the kitchen.
  - Keep your emergency numbers near the telephone.
  - Always call the fire department for any fire, even if the fire has been completely extinguished.
  - Have a fire evacuation plan in place in your home and practice it regularly with your family!
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## **Fireplace Safety**

- Keep Fireplaces and Woodstoves Clean
- Have your chimney or wood stove inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces. Leave glass doors open while burning a fire.
- Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue temperatures.
- Keep air inlets on wood stoves open, and never restrict air supply to fireplaces. Otherwise you may cause creosote buildup that could lead to a chimney fire.
- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around wood stoves.
- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Use only seasoned hardwood. Soft, moist wood accelerates creosote buildup.
- Build small fires that burn completely and produce less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris in your fireplace or wood stove.

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- When building a fire, place logs at the rear of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Soak hot ashes in water and place them in a metal container outside your home.

### **Protect the Outside of Your Home**

- Stack firewood outdoors at least 30 feet away from your home.
- Keep the roof clear of leaves, pine needles and other debris.
- Cover the chimney with a mesh screen spark arrester.
- Remove branches hanging above the chimney, flues or vents.

### **Protect the Inside of Your Home**

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Consider installing the new long life smoke alarms.
  - Provide proper venting systems for all heating equipment.
  - Extend all vent pipes at least three feet above the roof.
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## **Christmas Fire Safety Tips**

### **Live Christmas Trees**

- Do not purchase a live tree that is dry or dropping needles. Test the tree by bending the needles; fresh needles won't break when they are bent.
- Keep your Christmas tree in a sturdy base filled with water. Check the water level daily.
- Try to keep live trees as moist as possible by giving them plenty of water daily. A 6-foot live Christmas tree will use approximately 1 gallon of water every 2 days.
- Choose a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over. A tree stand with a one gallon water capacity is recommended.
- Spraying the Christmas tree with a flame retardant is always a good idea.
- NEVER use lit candles to decorate a live Christmas tree. All candles should be placed well away from any tree branches.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet (one meter) away from any heat source and try to position it near an electrical outlet so that electrical cords do not run long distances. Do not place the tree in a place where it may block exits.

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- Never use more than three sets of lights on an extension cord if one must be used. Overloaded extension cords can start a fire. The use of a power strip is recommended instead of an extension cord.
- When decorating your Christmas tree, always use safe, UL approved tree lights. Miniature lights are safest because they produce less heat.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use tree lights. Any string of lights with worn, frayed or broken cords, or loose bulb connections, should be discarded.
- Always unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Never use electric light strings that have an empty socket.
- Safely dispose of your tree before it becomes dangerously dry and begins dropping needles. Dried out trees are highly flammable and should not be left in a house or garage, or placed against a house. Never burn a tree or tree parts in a fireplace.

## Artificial Christmas Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant.
- Never use electric lights on a metal tree.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet (one meter) away from any heat source and try to position it near an electrical outlet so that electrical cords do not run long distances. Do not place the tree in a place where it may block exits.
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- Never use electric light strings that have an empty socket.

## Other Decorating Safety Tips

- Purchase only UL approved Christmas lights.
- Use only approved, weatherproof outdoor lights for outdoor decorations. Outdoor light sets are not for prolonged exposure to the elements and should be taken down as soon as the season is over.
- Outdoor light sets should be securely fastened with the sockets pointed down to avoid moisture build up.
- All candles should be placed in non-flammable candle holders. Place them where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.
- Do not use real candles in the windows; use only UL approved electric candles.
- Keep all ornaments, candles and electrical cords away from children and pets.
- Test all smoke detectors and replace batteries if needed.