FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY TIPS

Fire Prevention Week is October 4 – 10, 2015

Home Fire Safety Tips

Fires in homes are a serious issue. Did you know that if a fire starts in your home, you may have just two minutes to escape? The most effective way to protect yourself and your home from fire is to identify and remove fire hazards. 60 percent of house fire deaths occur in homes with no working smoke alarms. During a home fire, working smoke alarms and a fire escape plan that has been practiced regularly can save lives. Often, fatal fires are the result of not having a working smoke alarm or carbon monoxide detector.

You can prevent and/or escape fires through simple steps:

- Make sure you have a properly working smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm; change the batteries at least once a year.
- Plan and practice a family escape route. Learn how to use your fire extinguisher and remember if your clothes catch on fire to: **Stop, Drop and Roll.**
- If you are evacuating a burning building don't go through doors whose handles are hot. Leave your house, call for help. Do not go back to help someone else.
- If a fire occurs in your home, **GET OUT, STAY OUT and CALL** for help.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas.
- Test smoke alarms once a month, if they're not working, change the batteries.
- Talk with all household members about a fire escape plan and practice the plan twice a year.

Please review the Home Safety Checklist on the following page with your family for fire safety preparedness.

Home Safety Checklist

Smoke Alarms

- ☐ There is one smoke alarm on every level of the home and inside and outside each sleeping area.
- ☐ Smoke alarms are tested and cleaned monthly.
- ☐ Smoke alarm batteries are changed as needed.
- ☐ Smoke alarms are less than 10 years old.

Cooking Safety

- ☐ Cooking area is free from items that can catch fire.
- ☐ Kitchen stove hood is clean and vented to the outside.
- ☐ Pots are not left unattended on the stove.

Electrical & Appliance Safety

- ☐ Electrical cords do not run under rugs.
- ☐ Electrical cords are not frayed or cracked.
- ☐ Circuit-protected, multi-prong adapters are used for additional outlets.
- ☐ Large and small appliances are plugged directly into wall outlets.
- ☐ Clothes dryer lint filter and venting system are clean.

Candle Safety

- ☐ Candles are in sturdy fire-proof containers that won't be tipped over.
- ☐ All candles are extinguished before going to bed or leaving the room.
- ☐ Children and pets are never left unattended with candles.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- ☐ Carbon monoxide alarms are located on each level of the home.
- ☐ Carbon monoxide alarms are less than 7 years old.

Smoking Safety

- ☐ Family members who smoke only buy fire-safe cigarettes and smoke outside.
- ☐ Matches and lighters are secured out of children's sight.
- ☐ Ashtrays are large, deep and kept away from items that can catch fire.
- ☐ Ashtrays are emptied into a container that will not burn.

Heating Safety

- ☐ Chimney and furnace are cleaned and inspected yearly.
- ☐ Furniture and other items that can catch fire are at least 3 feet from fireplaces, wall heaters, baseboards, and space heaters.
- ☐ Fireplace and barbecue ashes are placed outdoors in a covered metal container at least 3 feet from anything that can catch fire.
- ☐ Extension cords are never used with space heaters.
- ☐ Heaters are approved by a national testing laboratory and have tip-over shut-off function.

Home Escape Plan

- ☐ Have two ways out of each room.
- ☐ Know to crawl low to the floor when escaping to avoid toxic smoke.
- ☐ Know that once you're out, stay out.
- ☐ Know where to meet after the escape.
- ☐ Meeting place should be near the front of your home, so firefighters know you are out.
- ☐ Practice your fire escape plan.

U.S. Fire Administration
www.usfa.fema.gov

FEMA

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WILDFIRE

Droughts and dry conditions throughout various times of the year increase the risk for wildfires. Careless use of fire in highly wooded areas can also dramatically increase the chance of a wildfire, which can then quickly spread across trees and dry brush and threaten homes and businesses that are in vicinity.

Wildfires often begin unnoticed. However, they spread quickly and every second counts!

What should I do to prepare ahead of time?

- Learn about wild fire risks in your area.
- Post emergency phone numbers by every phone in your home.
- Make sure driveway entrances and your house number or address are clearly marked.
- Identify and maintain an adequate water source outside your home, such as a small pond or swimming pool.
- Set aside household items that can be used as fire tools: a rake, ax, hand saw or chain saw, bucket and shovel. You may need to fight small fires before emergency responders arrive.
- Select building materials and plants that resist fire.
- Regularly clean roofs and gutters.
- Plan and practice two ways out of your neighborhood in case your primary route is blocked.
- Select a place for family members to meet outside your neighborhood in case you cannot get home or need to evacuate.
- Identify someone who is out of the area to contact if local phone lines are not working.
- Use the recycle or re-circulate mode on the air conditioner in your home or car.
- If you do not have air conditioning and it is too hot to stay inside with closed windows, seek shelter elsewhere.
- When smoke levels are high, do not use anything that burns and adds to indoor air pollution, such as candles, fireplaces and gas stoves. Do not vacuum because it stirs up particles that are already inside your home.
- If you have asthma or another lung disease, follow your health care provider's advice and seek medical care if your symptoms worsen.

WILDFIRE (Cont.)

Returning home after a wildfire

- Do not enter your home until fire officials say it is safe.
- Use caution when entering burned areas as hazards may still exist, including hot spots, which can flare up without warning.
- Avoid damaged or fallen power lines, poles and downed wires.
- Watch for ash pits and mark them for safety—warn family and neighbors to keep clear of the pits also.
- Watch animals closely and keep them under your direct control. Hidden embers and hot spots could burn your pets' paws or hooves.
- Follow public health guidance on safe cleanup of fire ash and safe use of masks.
- Wet debris down to minimize breathing dust particles.
- Wear leather gloves and heavy soled shoes to protect hands and feet.
- Cleaning products, paint, batteries and damaged fuel containers need to be disposed of properly to avoid risk.
- Ensure your food and water are safe.
- Discard any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke or soot.
- Do NOT ever use water that you think may be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula.
- Let your family know that you are safe.

For more information on fire prevention and fire safety, please visit the following websites:

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District: http://www.cccfpd.org
National Fire Protection Association: http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information/safety-tip-sheets
Red Cross: http://www.redcross.org

Electrical Safety

Flipping a light switch. Plugging in a coffeemaker. Charging a laptop computer. These are second nature for most of us. Electricity makes our lives easier. However, we need to be cautious and keep safety in mind.

SAFETY TIPS

- Have all electrical work done by a qualified electrician.
- When you are buying or remodeling a home, have it inspected by a qualified electrician.
- Only plug one heat-producing appliance (such as a coffee maker, toaster, space heater, etc.) into a receptacle outlet at a time.
- Major appliances (refrigerators, dryers, washers, stoves, air conditioners, etc.) should be plugged directly into a wall receptacle outlet. Extension cords and plug strips should not be used.
- Arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) are a kind of circuit breaker that shuts off electricity when a dangerous condition occurs. Consider having them installed in your home. Use a qualified electrician.
- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to reduce the risk of shock. GFCIs shut off an electrical circuit when it becomes a shock hazard. They should be installed inside the home in bathrooms, kitchens, garages and basements. All outdoor receptacles should be GFCI protected.
- Test AFCIs and GFCIs once a month to make sure they are working properly.
- Check electrical cords to make sure they are not running across doorways or under carpets. Extension cords are intended for temporary use. Have a qualified electrician add more receptacle outlets so you don't have to use extension cords.
- Use light bulbs that match the recommended wattage on the lamp or fixture. There should be a sticker that indicates the maximum wattage light bulb to use.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Call a qualified electrician or your landlord if you have:

- Frequent problems with blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers
- A tingling feeling when you touch an electrical appliance
- Discolored or warm wall outlets
- A burning or rubbery smell coming from an appliance
- Flickering or dimming lights
- Sparks from an outlet

www.nfpa.org/education

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9-volt Battery Safety

9-volt batteries power our smoke alarms, household items and toys. They can be found in most homes. But these batteries can be a fire hazard if not stored safely or disposed of with care.

The problem

- 9-volt batteries can be dangerous. The positive and negative posts are close together. If a metal object touches the two posts of a 9-volt battery, it can cause a short circuit. This can make enough heat to start a fire.
- It is unsafe to store 9-volt batteries in a drawer near paper clips, coins, pens, or other batteries. Do not store common household items such as steel wool, aluminum foil, and keys near 9-volt batteries. If these items touch the two posts, there is a greater risk of a fire starting.
- Weak batteries may have enough charge to cause a fire. Some fires have started in trash when 9-volt batteries were thrown away with other metal items.

Storing 9-volt batteries

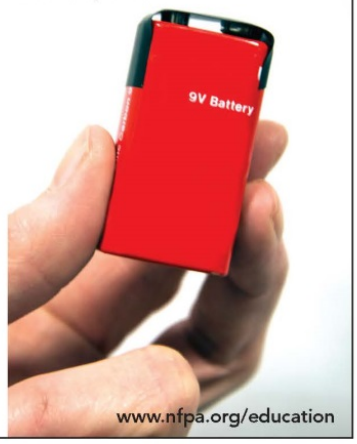
- Keep batteries in original packaging until you are ready to use them. If loose, keep the posts covered with masking, duct, or electrical tape. Prevent the posts from coming in contact with metal objects.
- Keep them someplace safe where they won't be tossed around.
- Store batteries standing up.
- 9-volt batteries should not be stored loose in a drawer. Do not store them in containers with other batteries.

Disposal

- 9-volt batteries should not be thrown away with trash. They can come in contact with other batteries or pieces of metal.
- 9-volt batteries can be taken to a collection site for household hazardous waste.
- To be safe, cover the positive and negative posts with masking, duct, or electrical tape before getting rid of batteries.
- Some states do not allow any type of battery to be disposed of with trash. Check with your city or town for the best way to get rid of batteries.

9-VOLT BATTERY STORAGE

Keep batteries in original packaging until you are ready to use them. If loose, keep the posts covered with masking, duct, or electrical tape. Prevent the posts from coming in contact with metal objects.



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