

# Home Safety Tip(s)

## SMOKE DETECTORS

Smoke is responsible for three out of four deaths.

- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and outside of sleeping areas.
- Test every detector at least once a month. [See your instruction book for the location of the test button.]
- Keep smoke detectors dust free. Replace batteries with new ones at least twice a year (Day Light Savings), or sooner if the detector makes a chirping sound.
- 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.
- Inexpensive smoke detectors are available for the hearing impaired.

## FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

They remain your best bet if you're on the spot when a fire begins.

- Fire extinguishers should be mounted in the kitchen, garage, and workshop.
- Purchase an ABC type extinguisher for extinguishing all types of fires.
- Learn how to use your fire extinguisher before there is an emergency.
- Remember, use an extinguisher on small fires only. If there is a large fire, get out immediately and call 911 from another location.

## THINKING AHEAD: Your Exit Plan

As with other things, the best motto is, "Be Prepared."

- Prepare a floor plan of your home showing at least two ways out of each room.
- Sleep with your bedroom door closed. In the event of fire, it helps to hold back heat and smoke. But if a door feels hot, do not open it; escape through another door or window.
- Easy-to-use window escape ladders are available through many catalogues and outlet stores. For instance, First Alert sells one for around \$90.
- Agree on a fixed location out-of-doors where family members are to gather for a head count.
- Stay together away from the fire. Call 911 from another location. Make certain that no one goes back inside the burning building.
- Check corridors and stairways to make sure they are free of obstructions and combustibles.
- To help cut down on the need for an emergency exit in the first place, clear all unnecessary items from the attic, basement, garage, and closets.

## FIREPLACE

Remember, you're deliberately bringing fire into your home; respect it.

- Use a fireplace screen to prevent sparks from flying.
- Don't store newspapers, kindling, or matches near the fireplace or have an exposed rug or wooden floor right in front of the fireplace.
- Have your chimney inspected by a professional prior to the start of every heating season and cleaned to remove combustible creosote build-up if necessary.
- Install a chimney spark arrester to prevent roof fires.
- When lighting a gas fireplace, strike your match first, then turn on the gas.

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## FURNACE/SPACE HEATERS

Used improperly, a space heater can be the most dangerous appliance in your house.

- Install and maintain heating equipment correctly. Have your furnace inspected by a professional prior to the start of every heating season.
- Don't store newspapers, rags, or other combustible materials near a furnace, hot water heater, space heater, etc.
- Don't leave space heaters operating when you're not in the room.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that might burn, including the wall.
- Don't use extension cords with electrical space heaters. The high amount of current they require could melt the cord and start a fire.
- When lighting a gas space heater, strike your match first, then turn on the gas.
- Never use a gas range as a substitute for a furnace or space heater.

## CLOTHES DRYER

Under some circumstances, dangerous heat can build up in a dryer.

- Never leave home with the clothes dryer running.
- Dryers must be vented to the outside, not into a wall or attic.
- Clean the lint screen frequently to keep the airway clear.
- Never put in synthetic fabrics, plastic, rubber, or foam because they retain heat.

## ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

Electricity, the silent servant, can become a silent assassin.

- It is better not to use extension cords. If you feel you must use one, make sure that it is not frayed or worn. Do not run it under a rug or twist it around a nail or hook.
- Never overload a socket. In particular, the use of "octopus" outlets, outlet extensions that accommodate several plugs, is strongly discouraged.
- Do not use light bulb wattage which is too high for the fixture. Look for the label inside each fixture which tells the maximum wattage.
- Check periodically for loose wall receptacles, loose wires, or loose lighting fixtures. Sparking means that you've waited too long.
- Allow air space around the TV to prevent overheating. The same applies to plug-in radios and stereo sets, and to powerful lamps.
- If a circuit breaker trips or a fuse blows frequently, immediately cut down on the number of appliances on that line.
- Be sure all electrical equipment bears the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label.
- In many older homes, the capacity of the wiring system has not kept pace with today's modern appliances. Overloaded electrical systems invite fire. Watch for these overload signals: dimming lights when an appliance goes on, a shrinking TV picture, slow heating appliances, or fuses blowing frequently. Call a qualified electrician to get expert help.

# Home Safety Tip(s)

## KITCHEN

Careless cooking is the number one cause of residential fires. Never leave cooking unattended.

- It's wise to have a fire extinguisher near the kitchen. Keep it 10 feet away from the stove on the exit side of the kitchen.
- Never pour water on a grease fire; turn off the stove and cover the pan with a lid, or close the oven door.
- Keep pot handles on the stove pointing to the back, and always watch young children in the kitchen.
- Don't store items on the stove top, as they could catch fire.
- Keep kitchen appliances clean and in good condition, and turn them off and disconnect them when not in use.
- Don't overload kitchen electrical outlets and don't use appliances with frayed or cracked wires.
- Wear tight-fitting clothing when you cook. Here's why: An electrical coil on the stove reaches a temperature of 800 degrees. A gas flame goes over 1,000 degrees. Your dish towel or pot holder can catch fire at 400 degrees. So can your bathrobe, apron, or loose sleeve.
- Be sure your stove is not located under a window in which curtains are hanging.
- Clean the exhaust hood and duct over the stove regularly. and wipe up spilled grease as soon as the surface of the stove is cool.
- Operate your microwave only when there is food in it.

## CHILDREN and GRANDCHILDREN

One-fourth of all fire-deaths of children are from fires started by children.

- Keep lighters and matches out of the reach of children.
- Never leave children unattended with fire or space heaters.
- Children are naturally curious about fire, so keep an eye on them. But if a child repeatedly plays with fire or seems to have a morbid fascination with fire, seek professional help at once.
- If youngsters live with you or stay overnight occasionally, be sure that they know how to escape from every room and are part of your emergency exit plan. [See "Thinking Ahead" above]

## GASOLINE AND OTHER FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS

Those cans aren't painted red just for the fun of it!

- Flammable liquids should be stored only in approved safety containers, and the containers should be kept outside the house and garage in a separate storage shed.
- Gas up lawn equipment and snowthrowers outside, away from enclosed areas and any source of sparks or heat.
- Start the equipment 10 feet from where you filled it with fuel.
- Don't fill a hot lawn mower, snowthrower, or other motor; let it cool first.
- Never clean floors or do other general cleaning with gasoline or flammable liquids.

## SMOKING

If you actually believe that you're immune from cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and other ills, at least worry about burning to death.

- Never smoke in bed.
- Don't smoke when you are drinking or are abnormally tired.
- Use large, deep ashtrays, and empty them frequently.
- Never dump an ashtray into the trash without wetting the butts and ashes first.