

10 Tips for Fire Safety

1) Install smoke detectors

Working smoke detectors can alert you to a fire in your home in time for you to escape, even if you are sleeping. Install smoke detectors on every level of your home, including the basement, and outside each sleeping area. If you sleep with the door closed, install one inside your sleeping area as well.

Test detectors every month, following the manufacturer's directions, and replace batteries when you adjust your clocks or whenever a detector "chirps" to signal low battery power. Never "borrow" a smoke detector's battery for another use - a disabled detector can't save your life. Replace detectors that are more than 10 years old.

For complete protection, consider installing automatic fire sprinklers in addition to smoke detectors.

2) Keep an eye on smokers

Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths in North America. Smoking in bed or when you are drowsy could be fatal. Provide smokers with large, deep, non-tip ashtrays, and soak butts with water before discarding them. Before going to bed or leaving home after someone has been smoking, check under and around cushions and upholstered furniture for smoldering cigarettes.

3) Cook carefully

Never leave cooking unattended. Keep cooking areas clear of combustibles, and wear clothes with short, rolled-up, or tight-fitting sleeves when you cook. Turn pot handles inward on the stove where you can't bump them and children can't grab them. Enforce a "kid-free zone" that is three feet (one meter) around your kitchen stove. If grease catches fire in a pan, slide a lid over the pan to smother the flames and turn off the heat source. Leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.

5) Remember: matches and lighters are tools, not toys

In a child's hands, matches and lighters can be deadly. Use only child-resistant lighters and store all matches and lighters up high, where kids can't see or reach them, preferably in a locked cabinet. Teach young children that matches and lighters are tools, not toys, and should be used by adults only or with adult supervision. Teach young children not to touch them and to tell a grown-up if they find matches or lighters; older children should bring matches and lighters to an adult immediately.

6) Give space heaters space

Keep portable heaters and space heaters at least three feet (one meter) away from anything that can burn. Keep children and pets away from heaters, and never leave heaters on when you leave home or go to bed.

7) Cool a burn

Run cool water over a burn for 10 to 15 minutes. Never apply ice. It is dangerous to put butter or any other grease on a burn because it seals in the heat and can damage the tissue further. If the burned skin blisters or is charred, see a doctor immediately.

8) Use electricity safely

If an electric appliance smokes or has an unusual smell, unplug it immediately, and have it serviced before using it again. Replace any electrical cord that is cracked or frayed. Don't overload extension cords or run them under rugs. Don't tamper with your fuse box or use improperly sized fuses.

4) Plan your escape from fire

If a fire breaks out in your home, you have to get out fast. Prepare for a fire emergency by sitting down with your family and designing an escape plan. Be sure that everyone knows at least two unobstructed ways out - doors and windows - from every room. (If you live in an apartment building use the stairs - do not include elevators in your escape plan.) Decide on a meeting place outside where everyone will gather after they escape. Have your entire household practice your escape plan at least twice a year.

9) Crawl low under smoke

During a fire, smoke and poisonous gases rise with the heat. The air is cleaner near the floor. If you encounter smoke or flames while you are escaping from a fire, use an alternative escape route. If you must escape through smoke, crawl on your hands and knees, keeping your head 12 to 24 inches (30 to 60 centimeters) above the floor.

10) Stop, drop, and roll

If your clothes catch fire, don't run. STOP where you are, DROP to the ground, cover your face with your hands, and ROLL over and over to smother the flames.