



www.houstonburnedchildrensfund.com

Fire Safety and Prevention Tips

We're dedicated to the prevention of fires through education and to helping Houston-area children who have been injured in fires. As firefighters, we see too many preventable fire tragedies. But with these safety tips from Houston firefighters and the National Fire Protection Association, you can better protect yourself, and your loved ones and friends. More fire safety tips can be found on the National Fire Protection Association web site at www.NFPA.org.

Escaping a home fire

For safety at home, have a fire escape plan, including a map of each level of the home. Show all doors and windows. Discuss the plan with everyone who lives in your household.

Children, older adults, and people with disabilities may need assistance to wake up and get out. Make sure that someone is assigned to help them.

Teach your children how to escape on their own in case you cannot help them. Make sure everyone in your home knows how to call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number from a cell phone or from a neighbor's phone.

Smoke detectors

Working smoke alarms save lives. With smoke alarms in your home, you are twice as likely to survive a fire. Make sure everyone in the home understands the sound of the smoke alarm and how to respond.

Test smoke alarms at least once a month. Change the batteries twice a year – or when the time changes each spring and fall. Smoke detectors over 10 years old should be replaced.

Portable generators

Portable generators can be very useful during storm season and for recreational activities. To prevent

fires and carbon monoxide poisoning when toxic fumes enter your home or recreational vehicle, use portable generators outdoors in well-ventilated areas away from doors, windows, vents, and other building openings.

Cooking

To prevent cooking fires, stay alert. If you are sleepy, have consumed alcohol, or have taken medicine or drugs that make you drowsy, you are at risk when cooking.

The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking. Stay in the kitchen when you fry, grill, or broil food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.

And if you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, stay in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.

Keep anything that can catch fire – your clothing, food items, oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels, and curtains – away from your stovetop.

Charcoal grills

Use long matches to avoid burning your fingers when lighting charcoal grills. If you use an electrical charcoal

starter, be sure to use a grounded extension cord. If you choose to use lighter fluid, use only fluid intended for charcoal grills.

Never add charcoal starter fluid to coals or kindling that has already been ignited.

Never use gasoline or any other flammable liquid except charcoal starter or lighter fluid to start a charcoal fire. Store the charcoal starter fluid out of reach of children and away from heat sources.

Dispose of charcoal coals only after they are cool. Empty the coals into a metal container with a tight-fitting lid that is used only to collect coals. Place the container away from anything that can burn. Never empty coals directly into a trashcan.

Turkey fryers

Outdoor gas-fueled turkey fryers that immerse the turkey in hot oil are dangerous. Closely follow manufacturer directions for use. These turkey fryers use large quantities of cooking oil at high temperatures. Hot oil often is released during the cooking process. Use of turkey fryers by consumers can lead to devastating burns or other injuries and the destruction of property. Caution is urged.

Propane grills

Check the propane grill gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year and after each time the gas tank is reconnected.

A soap-and-water solution – 1/3 liquid dish soap and 2/3 water – applied to the hose and connection will quickly reveal escaping propane by causing bubbles to form. If you determine by smell or by the soap bubble test that your gas tank hose and connection has a gas leak, do the following:

(1) Turn off the gas tank and grill.

(2) If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again.

(3) If the leak does not stop, call the fire department.

Always store propane gas tanks outside of buildings or garages. Vapors leaked indoors can be easily ignited by pilot lights or electrical equipment, causing an explosion. If you store a gas grill inside during the winter, disconnect the tank or cylinder and leave it outside.

Light a propane grill only with the cover open.

Preventing scalds and burns

Teach children that hot things burn.

Place heated objects so they cannot be pulled down or knocked over.

Turn pot handles away from the stove's edge.

Use dry oven mitts or potholders.

When children are old enough, teach them to cook safely.

Portable electric space heaters

Turn portable electric space heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.

Purchase and use only portable space heaters that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory and that have an automatic shut-off—if they tip over, they shut off.

Place space heaters on a solid, flat surface and keep them and their electrical cords away from things that can burn, high traffic areas, and doorways.

Plug space heaters directly into wall outlets and never into an extension cord or power strip.

Do not plug anything else into the same circuit as the one you are using

for your space heater. Doing so could result in overheating.

Check often for a secure plug/outlet fit. If the plug does not fit snugly into the wall outlet or if the plug becomes very hot, the outlet may need to be replaced. Have a qualified electrician replace the wall outlet.

Inspect for cracked or damaged cords, broken plugs, or loose connections. Replace them before using the space heater.

Fireplaces

Always use a metal or heat-tempered glass screen on a fireplace and keep it in place.

Burn only dry, seasoned wood. Never burn trash in the fireplace. Not only is it cleaner for the environment, it also creates less buildup in the chimney.

Use artificial fire logs according to manufacturer's recommendations. Never burn more than one log at a time.

Use only newspaper and kindling wood or fire starters to start a fire. Never use flammable liquids, such as lighter fluid, kerosene, or gasoline, to start a fire. They produce invisible vapors that can easily catch fire.

Chimneys and vents need to be

cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional at least once a year.

Keep children and pets away from the fireplace doors, screens and vents – which can remain dangerously hot for hours after the fire goes out.

Candles

Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which can look, smell, and feel like real candles.

When using candles, place them in sturdy, safe candleholders that will not burn or tip over. Protect candle flames with glass chimneys or containers.

Never leave a burning candle unattended. Burning candles can start a fire.

Avoid using candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas. Extinguish candles when you leave a room or the home or go to bed.

Keep children and pets away from burning candles.

Always use a flashlight—not a candle—for emergency lighting.

Use only battery-powered lights in tents, trailers, motor homes, and boats.

Matches and lighters

Keep matches and lighters high out of the reach of children, in a locked cabinet.

Purchase and use only child-resistant lighters.

Lighters that look like toys can confuse children and cause fires, injuries, and death. Do not buy or use them.

Teach young children to tell a grownup when they find matches or lighters and to never touch matches or lighters.

Outdoor burning

Check with your local fire department or municipality for any restrictions before starting an open-air, recreational, or outdoor cooking fire. Obtain proper permits, if required. You might not be permitted to do outdoor burning in some municipalities and during some seasons.

Closely supervise all outdoor fires – and keep them a safe distance from people, pets, and property.

Supervise children around any fire outdoors.

Avoid burning on windy, dry days. When conditions are windy or dry, it is easy for open burning to

spread out of control.

Where outdoor burning is allowed, never use gasoline or other flammable or combustible liquids.

When burning, have a hose, bucket of water, or shovel and dirt or sand nearby to extinguish the fire.

Make sure the fire is out before leaving.

Portable fire extinguishers and fire fighting

As a general rule, fire fighting should be left to the fire department. More than half of people who try to extinguish kitchen fires, for example, are injured.

Only adults who know how to use portable fire extinguishers should use them. Homeowners should have class ABC multipurpose fire extinguishers that are regularly serviced and inspected.

Before trying to fight a fire, be sure that:

- You know how to use the fire extinguisher and it is the correct type.
- Everyone else has left the home and someone is calling the fire department.
- The fire is small, confined, and

not spreading.

- You have a clear escape route.

Clothes dryers

Have your clothes dryer installed and serviced by a professional, if possible.

Do not use the dryer without a lint filter. Clean out the dryer's lint filter before each use of the dryer.

The vent pipe should be cleaned quarterly -- or if you notice that it is taking longer than usual for your clothes to dry.

Turn off the dryer when you leave home or go to bed.

Fireworks safety

Fireworks are a fun holiday tradition in many parts of the nation, but they cause thousands of fires and injuries each year.

Observe your local laws regarding fireworks. Check for restrictions before purchasing fireworks.

** In the City of Houston, it is unlawful to possess, transport or discharge fireworks. Violations can be reported to the Fire Marshall's office at 832.394.6900.*

Store fireworks safely before use.

Never put them inside your clothing.

Never modify fireworks or experiment with homemade fireworks.

Parents should not allow young children to handle fireworks, including sparklers.

Designate a fireworks "shooter" for your holiday gathering. A responsible adult should supervise fireworks activities.

Observe weather conditions, especially wind, before shooting fireworks.

Shoot fireworks away from people, buildings, vehicles, and other property.

Wear safety glasses and keep water nearby when shooting fireworks.

Soak spent fireworks with water before discarding.

Christmas trees and holiday lights

According to the U.S. government, one of every three home Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical problems. Fires caused by Christmas trees are three times as likely to result in fatalities.

If you have an artificial tree, be sure it's labeled, certified or identified by the manufacturer as fire-retardant.

If you choose a fresh tree, make sure the green needles don't fall off when touched; before placing it in the stand, cut one to two inches from the base of the trunk. Add water to the tree stand, and be sure to water it daily.

Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory, and make sure you know whether they are designed for indoor or outdoor use. Follow manufacturer directions on connecting multiple strands of lights and electric power usage.

Inspect lights for worn or broken cords, or loose bulb connections.

Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving the home or going to bed.

After Christmas, get rid of the tree. Dried-out trees are a fire hazard and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside the home.

Smoking

If you smoke, smoke outside.

If you smoke, use only fire-safe cigarettes. To prevent a deadly cigarette fire, you must be alert. You will not be alert if you are sleepy, have taken medicine or drugs that make you drowsy, or have consumed alcohol.

Never smoke in bed.

Never smoke where fast-burning medical oxygen is used.

Wherever you smoke, use deep, sturdy ashtrays. If ashtrays are not available, use a metal can or pail. Never empty smoking material directly into a trashcan. Place the ashtrays or metal cans away from anything that can burn.

Do not throw out cigarettes into vegetation, potted plants or landscaping, peat moss, dried grasses, mulch, leaves, and other similar items. They can easily catch fire.

Before you throw out butts and ashes, make sure they are out. Put them out in water or sand.

Before going to bed, check under furniture cushions and around places where people smoke for cigarette butts that may have fallen out of sight.

Keep cigarettes, lighters, matches, and other smoking materials out of the reach of children.