



Preventing and Preparing for Household Fires

Fires in homes are most often caused by cooking accidents, smoking and unsafe use of woodstoves or space heaters. Here are some things you can do to avoid a home fire or protect yourself during a fire.

Protecting against fires

- Install smoke detectors in or near all sleeping areas and on every level of your home, including the basement. Check smoke detectors on a regular basis and replace the batteries twice yearly.
- Have A-B-C type fire extinguishers. Teach family members how to use them.
- Know the location of all exits including windows. If you live in an apartment, count the number of doorways between your apartment and the two nearest exits.
- Know two ways out of every room in case smoke or flames block your primary exit.
- Choose a meeting place outside the home, and be sure all family members are accounted for. If someone is missing, let the fire department know.
- Have an escape plan and practice it with your family. This will help ensure you can get out quickly when there is no time for mistakes.
- Keep folding or chain style ladders stored in each upstairs bedroom.
- Use alternative heat sources, such as woodstoves or space heaters, safely:
 - Never use gas ovens, gas ranges, barbecues, or most portable or propane heaters for indoor heating.
 - Have fire-fighting materials available: dry powder, fire extinguisher, heavy tarp or blanket, and water.
 - Before using an alternative heat source, read the manufacturer's instructions.

- Do not smoke in the bedroom, on the couch or anywhere you might fall asleep while smoking.
- Sleep with your bedroom door closed.
- Make sure your house number is clearly visible from the street and that fire trucks can reach your home.

If fire strikes

- If there is a fire — evacuate. Do not go back inside. Call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's house.
- Never use water on an electrical fire.
- Smother oil and grease fires in the kitchen with baking soda or salt, or put a lid over the flame if it is burning in a pan.
- If caught in smoke — drop to your hands and knees and crawl; breathe shallowly through your nose and use your blouse, shirt or jacket as a filter.
- If you must move through flames — hold your breath, move quickly, cover your head and hair, keep your head down and close your eyes as much as possible.
- If your clothes catch fire, “stop, drop and roll” until the fire is out.
- If you are in a room and cannot escape, leave the door closed, stay low to the floor and hang a white or light-colored sheet outside the window.



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