

**Office of Integrated Health
Health & Safety Information**

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Fire Prevention Health & Safety Alert

Steps You Can Take Now!!

- ✓ Make sure there is a working smoke alarm on each level of your home. Place it in the area nearest the bedrooms. If the bedrooms are on opposite ends of the home, use two smoke alarms. ***Check smoke detectors monthly and change batteries as needed.***
- ✓ Talk to household members regularly about the dangers of fire, matches and lighters, and keep same in a safe & secure place, so those who are unable to safely use them cannot accidentally find them.
- ✓ Do not use portable heaters. They can tip & quickly start a fire (Warda, Tenenbein & Moffatt, 1999).
- ✓ Do not burn scented candles. They are one of the leading causes of residential fires in the U.S. (Warda & Ballesteros, 2008)
- ✓ Clean the lint screen on the dryer after every use. Nearly 3000 home clothes dryer fires are reported each year and cause an estimated 5 deaths, 100 injuries, and \$35 million in property loss. Failure to clean the dryer is the leading cause of home clothes dryer fires (U.S. Fire Administration, 2012).
- ✓ Check the dryer vent frequently too, in order to ensure that it is not obstructed by a collection of lint and/or another combustible obstacle. Birds and other small animals can pry open the outside covers of dryer vents and make nests which can increase the risk of a fire (U.S. Fire Administration, 2012).
- ✓ Make sure clothing pockets are emptied before putting clothes in the dryer. Lighters, perfume, paper, and other combustible items left in clothing pockets can increase the risk of a dryer fire (U.S. Fire Administration, 2012).
- ✓ Make sure your dryer vent is metal and is non-flammable/UL approved. Older plastic-type dryer vents can catch fire more easily (U.S. Fire Administration, 2012).
- ✓ Do not ever leave the house with the dryer in use.
- ✓ Regularly check the condition of all types of electrical cords. Do not use any electrical cord if the wires are showing or frayed (FEMA, 2005).
- ✓ Store flammable products like aerosol cans out of direct sunlight. A cool, dark closet is best (FEMA, 2005).

- ✓ Never store gasoline cans inside the house or in an attached garage (FEMA, 2005)
- ✓ When storing batteries in the home, do not allow them to roll around in a drawer. If the ends hit together, it can cause a spark & start a fire, even if the batteries are “dead”. Put masking tape over the ends & place the batteries in a Ziploc bag. Do the same when disposing batteries to prevent fires in trash or recycling receptacles (Laborers’ Health and Safety Fund of North America (LHSFNA), 2014).
- ✓ If an electrical outlet becomes overly hot, immediately unplug the device and call an electrician.
- ✓ Don't leave decorative string lights switched “on” while you are out of the house or asleep.
- ✓ Vacuum the slatted covers of bathroom exhaust fans so they do not become clogged and overheat.

Cooking Safely

- ✓ Stay in the kitchen when cooking, frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- ✓ Stay in the home while baking or slow-roasting food. Use a timer to remind you that food is cooking.
- ✓ Keep potholders, towels, food containers, etc. away from the stove burners so they do not catch fire.

Use Caution with Fire Extinguishers

- ✓ Use a portable fire extinguisher ONLY if you have been trained by the fire department and in the following conditions:
 - The fire is confined to a small area, and is not growing.
 - The room is not filled with smoke.
 - Everyone has exited the building.
 - The fire department has been called.
- ✓ Remember the word **PASS** when using a fire extinguisher (OSHA, n.d.).
 - **Pull** the pin and hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you.
 - **Aim low** Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
 - **Squeeze** the lever slowly and evenly.
 - **Sweep** the nozzle from side to side.

RESOURCES

- Download NFPA's entire 67-page guide, ***Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities*** (NFPA, 2016c) here: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/People-at-risk/People-with-disabilities>
- Download NFPA's fire exit plan template entitled, ***How to make a home fire escape plan*** here: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Campaigns/Fire-Prevention-Week/FPW17/FPW17EscapePlanGrid.pdf> (NFPA, 2017)
- Download NFPA's ***Escape planning tips*** here: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/EscapePlanningTips.pdf> (NFPA, 2016b)
- Download NFPA's (2016a) handout, ***Smoke Alarms at Home*** here: <https://www.nfpa.org/~/-/media/files/public-education/resources/safety-tip-sheets/smokealarms.pdf>
- The NFPA's 67-page guide, ***Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities*** suggests that caregivers should consider purchasing an Assistive Technology (AT) "evacuation device" (NFPA, 2016c, p. 20) for individuals that cannot ambulate independently. While some researchers doubt that the use of an AT evacuation device will significantly reduce the need for human assistance, they do believe it can be an important tool to improve the efficiency of an evacuation (McClure, et al., 2011). ***(Discuss emergency evacuation planning with the individual's primary care physician and obtain an evaluation & instructions for an AT evacuation device from an OT or PT, before making this a part of any specific individual's Personalized Emergency Evacuation Plan or PEEP.)***
- Document each person's Fire Exit Plan/PEEP practice and their improvement and update as needed (NFPA, 2016c).
- The U.S. Fire Administration, a division of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has numerous downloadable outreach materials and educational programs. You can find them here: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/>
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has resource information on the proper use of fire extinguishers. You can find it here: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/portable_use.html

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