

FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY TIPS FROM FIREFIGHTER JOE...

Firefighter Joe believes the best way to stay out of a fire is to practice good fire prevention and safety tips. Whether it's around your house, school, business, church, or other structure, following good fire prevention practices is the best way to keep you safe, all year round.

FIRE PREVENTION AT HOME:

More than 4,000 Americans die each year in fires and approximately 20,000 are injured. An overwhelming number of fires occur in the home. There are time-tested ways to prevent a fire at home. It's merely a matter of planning ahead.

Every Home Should Have at Least One Working Smoke Alarm

Buy a smoke alarm at any hardware or discount store. It's inexpensive protection for you and your family. Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home. A working smoke alarm can double your chances of survival. Test it monthly, keep it free of dust and replace the battery at least twice a year (usually when clocks are adjusted for daylight savings time.) Smoke alarms themselves should be replaced after ten years of service, or as recommended by the manufacturer.

Prevent Electrical Fires

Never overload circuits or extension cords. Do not place cords and wires under rugs, over nails or in high traffic areas. Immediately shut off and unplug appliances that sputter, spark or emit an unusual smell. Have them professionally repaired or replaced.

Use Appliances Wisely

When using appliances, follow the manufacturer's safety precautions. Overheating, unusual smells, shorts and sparks are all warning signs that appliances need to be shut off, then replaced or repaired. Unplug appliances when not in use. Use safety caps to cover all unused outlets, especially if there are small children in the home.

Alternate Heaters

Portable heaters need their space. Keep anything combustible at least three feet away. Keep fire in the fireplace. Use fire screens and have your chimney cleaned annually. The creosote buildup can ignite a chimney fire that could easily spread. Kerosene heaters should be used only where approved by authorities. Never use gasoline or camp-stove fuel. Refuel outside and only after the heater has cooled.

Smoking

Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths and the second leading cause of injuries among people ages 65 and older. Cigarettes will continue to burn when they are not properly extinguished. When a resting cigarette is accidentally knocked over, it can smolder for hours before a flare-up occurs. Before you light your next cigarette, remember:

- Put your cigarette or cigar out at the first sign of feeling drowsy while watching television or reading.
- Use deep ashtrays and put your cigarette all the way out.



- Never smoke in bed.
- Don't walk away from lit cigarettes and other smoking materials.
- Don't put ashtrays on the arms of sofas or chairs.

FIRE SAFETY AT HOME:

Establish your own Operation E.D.I.T.H. Plan – Exit Drills In The Home. Here's how to make your own Operation EDITH Plan:

- Appoint a Fire Chief. The Fire Chief can be your father, mother, teen-aged brother or sister, or even the babysitter.
- The family visits each bedroom and picks 2 WAYS OUT- one the normal way out and the other emergency route, through a different door or window.
- Plan how each member of the family can reach the ground floor using the emergency route.
- Decide on a meeting place outside the house such as near the mailbox or driveway.
- Draw a picture of each floor in your home. Show where the rooms, doors, windows, and halls are. Then color the regular escape routes black and the emergency routes red. Copies should be placed where everyone can see them and be reminded of what to do in a fire emergency. Be sure the upper floors have an escape ladder available.

Hold a family meeting and discuss the following topics:

Always sleep with the bedroom doors closed. This will keep deadly heat and smoke out of bedrooms, giving you additional time to escape.

Keep flashlights with fresh batteries by your bedside - in case of power failure or heavy smoke, it will help you find your way out.

Find a way for everyone to sound a family alarm - Yelling, pounding on walls, whistles, etc. Practice yelling "FIRE!"

In a fire, time is critical. Don't waste time getting dressed, don't search for pets or valuables. Just get out!

Roll out of bed. Stay low. One breath of smoke or gases may be enough to kill.

Be sure to plan ahead:

Practice evacuating the building blindfolded. In a real fire situation, the amount of smoke generated by a fire most likely will make it difficult to see. practice staying low to the ground when escaping.

Always check a closed door with the back of your hand BEFORE opening - if it's warm or hot to the touch, leave it CLOSED and try a different route.

Learn to STOP, DROP to the ground, and ROLL if clothes catch fire.



FIRE SAFETY TIPS DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON:

Keep matches, lighters, and candles out of the reach of children.

If children are participating in Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or Advent candle-lighting ceremonies in your home, make sure they are being supervised by an adult.

Practice your Operation E.D.I.T.H Plan during the holidays. Visiting friends and family members will need to know two ways out if there is a fire emergency in your home.

Use only decorative lights that have been tested for safety. Look for the UL Label from Underwriters Laboratories on the light cords.

Check each set of lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, and/or loose connections. If there is any question about the safety of the light set, it should be thrown away.

Check the labels on the light set for inside or outside use. Never use inside lights outside. Be sure to fasten your outside light sets tightly so they will not be damaged by the wind. The wind can cause the wires to fray, break, and cause an electrical short circuit.

Read the manufacturers' instructions carefully. Do not use more than the recommended number of lights on a circuit.

Always turn off your lights on trees or on paper decorations before going out or going to bed. If there is a short circuit, a fire may start.

Keep children away from decorative lights and electrical decorations.

Always throw wrapping paper away immediately after opening a package.

Never burn wrapping paper in the fireplace. The paper can catch fire very quickly and cause a flash fire.

Never use candles on a tree, near evergreens, near paper decorations, or near wrapping paper.

Always use non-flammable candle-holders, Kinara, Advent wreaths, and Menorahs.

Always place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over. Don't forget about them. If candles are in a centerpiece on your holiday table, don't let them melt down into the decorations. That may cause a fire.

IMPORTANT: Make sure your emergency phone numbers are placed next to or on the telephone. Make sure that everyone knows where they are.

Check your fire extinguisher regularly to be sure that it is full and working properly. Make sure that everyone knows where it is and how to use it.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS:



There are three different basic types of fire extinguishers, based on the type of fire they can safely and properly put out.

Class A Extinguishers will put out fires in ordinary combustibles, such as wood and paper.

Class B Extinguishers should be used on fires involving flammable liquids, such as grease, gasoline, oil, etc.

Class C Extinguishers are suitable for use on electrically energized fires.

Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area, such as a wastebasket, and is not growing; everyone has exited the building; the fire department has been called or is being called; and the room is not filled with smoke.

To operate a fire extinguisher, remember the word PASS:

- Pull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism.
- Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
- Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.
- Sweep the nozzle from side-to-side. For the home, select a multi-purpose extinguisher (ABC - can be used on all types of home fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy as to be difficult to handle.

Dry Chemical extinguishers are usually rated for multiple purpose use. They contain an extinguishing agent and use a compressed, non-flammable gas as a propellant.

Halon extinguishers contain a gas that interrupts the chemical reaction that takes place when fuels burn. These types of extinguishers are often used to protect valuable electrical equipment since they leave no residue to clean up. Halon extinguishers have a limited range, usually 4 to 6 feet. The initial application of Halon should be made at the base of the fire, even after the flames have been extinguished.

Water These extinguishers contain water and compressed gas and should only be used on Class A (ordinary combustibles) fires.

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) extinguishers are most effective on Class B and C (liquids and electrical) fires. Since the gas disperses quickly, these extinguishers are only effective from 3 to 8 feet. The carbon dioxide is stored as a compressed liquid in the extinguisher; as it expands, it cools the surrounding air. The cooling will often cause ice to form around the “horn” where the gas is expelled from the extinguisher. Since the fire could re-ignite, continue to apply the agent even after the fire appears to be out.

