

Thurston County Development Services Fire Safety for Your Home



What You Should Know

Fire is the third leading cause of death in North America. Becoming proactive about fire safety issues and some common sense can reduce your risk of exposure to a fire. Here are some additional tips:

- Knowing the alarm signal from your home smoke alarm or a building fire alarm is critical. How can you possibly know when there is an emergency condition if you do not know the alarm signal?
- Know your escape route. You must have at least two methods of exiting your home or building.
- Security bars installed on basement windows are a potential life-threatening hazard.
- Regularly inspect the home for fire hazards. If there are adults in the home who smoke, they should use heavy safety ashtrays and discard ashes and butts in metal, sealed containers or the toilet.
- If there is a fireplace in the home, the entire opening should be covered by a heavy safety screen. The chimney should be professionally inspected and cleaned annually.
- Children should cook only under adult supervision. Children should never play with electrical cords or electrical sockets. They should ask adults for help plugging in equipment.
- Children should stay away from radiators and heaters, and they should be taught that these devices are not toys. Young children in particular must be taught not to play or drop anything into space heaters. Nothing should be placed or stored on top of a heater.
- Pots on stovetops should always have their handles turned toward the center of the stove, where children cannot reach up and pull or knock them off.
- Teach children to turn off lights, stereos, TVs, and other electrical equipment when they are finished using them.
- In the case of room heaters, children should ask an adult to turn it off when the room will be

empty.

-Children should never touch matches, lighters or candles. If they find matches or lighters within reach, they should ask an adult to move them.

-No one should stand too close to a fireplace or wood stove or other types of heaters, where clothes could easily catch fire.

-To 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.

-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.

-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.

Use these guidelines to inspect your home. The life you save may be your own!

Garage Area

- The water heater should be 18" off the garage floor and strapped to the wall with easy access to gas shut off. Do not hang or store flammable materials on or near your water heater.
- Flammable and combustible liquids and gases should be stored away from heat or spark producing equipment. It would be better to store them in a shed or an out building.
- Don't overload electrical cords or circuits. Never use frayed or damaged extension cords. Use only the proper gauge extension cord for the job, typically a 12 or 14 gauge for heavy-duty use.
- Safely store pesticides, fertilizers, cleaning agents and building supplies on level and secure shelving.
- Consider what may happen in an earthquake if these materials were to fall or spill. Read labels to check for product incompatibility with other products and store accordingly. Keep out of the reach of small children!
- Keep a fire extinguisher inside the garage near an exit. The extinguisher should be a multi-purpose dry chemical type with a minimum rating of 2A-10BC.
- Keep your dryer and dryer vent clean and free from excess lint.
- If you must store gasoline, do it in an approved safety can.
- Check your garage door's operation and safety features often. Small children can be injured or killed by an improperly working garage door.

Kitchen Area

- Keep your stove, oven and hood vent free of grease and dirt buildup.
- Don't use the stovetop for added counter space.
- Turn cooking handles to the outside away from the front of the cook top to keep out of the reach of children and avoid accidental spills.
- When cooking on a stovetop, always have the lid of the pot or pan that is in use close at hand. The lid can be used to smother a food or grease fire.
- Properly store all cleaning agents, check label for health hazard and flammability and store accordingly.
- Do not leave kitchen appliances on when no one is home.
- Install a multi-purpose dry chemical fire extinguisher in the kitchen.

Living Area

- When possible, replace extension cords with surge suppressing power strips that are equipped with a circuit breaker.
- Secure furniture and entertainment equipment to wall or floor to prevent damage or injury. This will help if there are climbing children in the home as well as earthquake prevention.
- Keep your fireplace in good working condition. Burn only dry seasoned wood or commercial fire logs. Do not burn garbage, plastics, grass or Christmas tree trimmings. Keep all combustible material at least 36" away from fireplace opening.
- Keep matches out of the reach of children.
- Make sure all exits from your home are clear - not blocked by stored items or furniture.

Bedrooms and Hallways

- A working smoke detector reduces the risk of dying in a home fire by nearly half.
- Don't smoke in bed! Dispose of smoking materials in a metal container - not in a waste basket.
- Keep at least one smoke detector on every level of a home. There should be a smoke detector in all hallways that lead to sleeping areas and in each bedroom. Smoke detectors should be checked each month and the batteries replaced on an annual basis or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Doors and windows should be in good working condition. A door can be used to slow fire and smoke spread. Windows can be used as a means of escape in the event of severe fire and smoke conditions.

Develop an Escape Route

- The speed of fire is phenomenal. During the first minute of a fire it spreads at a 100% rate. In two minutes, 300%. And in four minutes, 1100%. This is all the time you have to wake up and get out. It's the lack of time that kills! That is why an escape plan is imperative.
- Create at least two different escape routes for each family member and practice them with the entire family. When you practice your escape, close doors behind you. Closed doors slow the spread of fire. Also, you should crouch down low to avoid breathing in smoke.

- Make sure your children understand that a smoke detector signals a home fire and that they recognize its alarm.
- Have a designated meeting place outside and make sure all members of your family know the location.
- When all members of your family are outside, **STAY OUTSIDE**. Under no circumstance should anyone go back into your home during a fire. Call the fire department from a neighbor's house.

<http://www.firewise.org/> (LINKS)

<http://www.ul.com/consumers/index.html> (LINKS)

<http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/fires.htm> (LINKS)