



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Pike County General Health District

Fire Safety Recommendations

Updated March 2008

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The following pages were compiled based on information from the United States Fire Administration

The Nature of Fire

Every day Americans experience the horror of fire. But most people don't understand fire. Only when we know the true nature of fire can we prepare ourselves and our families. Each year more than 4,000 Americans die and approximately 20,000 are injured in fires, many of which could be prevented.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) believes that fire deaths can be reduced by teaching people the basic facts about fire. Below are some simple facts that explain the particular characteristics of fire.

Fire is FAST!

There is little time!

In less than 30 seconds a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for thick black smoke to fill a house. In minutes, a house can be engulfed in flames. Most fires occur in the home when people are asleep. If you wake up to a fire, you won't have time to grab valuables because fire spreads too quickly and the smoke is too thick. There is only time to escape.

Fire is HOT!

Heat is more threatening than flames.

A fire's heat alone can kill. Room temperatures in a fire can be 100 degrees at floor level and rise to 600 degrees at eye level. Inhaling this super hot air will scorch your lungs. This heat can melt clothes to your skin. In five minutes a room can get so hot that everything in it ignites at once: this is called flashover.

Fire is DARK!

Fire isn't bright, it's pitch black.

Fire starts bright, but quickly produces black smoke and complete darkness. If you wake up to a fire you may be blinded, disoriented and unable to find your way around the home you've lived in for years.

Fire is DEADLY!

Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do.

Fire uses up the oxygen you need and produces smoke and poisonous gases that kill. Breathing even small amounts of smoke and toxic gases can make you drowsy, disoriented and short of breath. The odorless, colorless fumes can lull you into a deep sleep before the flames reach your door. You may not wake up in time to escape.

Fire Safety Tips

In the event of a fire, remember time is the biggest enemy and every second counts!

Escape first, then call for help. Develop a home fire escape plan and designate a meeting place outside. Make sure everyone in the family knows two ways to escape from every room. Practice feeling your way out with your eyes closed. Never stand up in a fire, always crawl low under the smoke and try to keep your mouth covered. Never return to a burning building for any reason; it may cost you your life.

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

Home Fire Prevention

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 and survive a fire. It's not a question of luck. It's 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 once a year. 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 always 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.

Affordable Home Fire Safety Sprinklers

When home fire sprinklers are used with working smoke alarms, your chances of surviving a fire are greatly increased. Sprinklers are affordable - they can increase property value and lower insurance rates.

Plan Your Escape

Practice an escape plan from every room in the house. Caution everyone to stay low to the floor when escaping from fire and never to open doors that are hot. Select a location where everyone can meet after escaping the house. Get out then call for help.

Caring for Children

Children under five are naturally curious about fire. Many play with matches and lighters. Tragically, children set over 20,000 house fires every year. Take the mystery out of fire play by teaching your children that fire is a tool, not a toy.

Caring for Older People

Every year over 1,200 senior citizens die in fires. Many of these fire deaths could have been prevented. Seniors are especially vulnerable because many live alone and can't respond quickly.

Smoke Alarms

In the event of a fire, properly installed and maintained smoke alarms will provide an early warning alarm to your household. This alarm could save your own life and those of your loved ones by providing the chance to escape.

Why Should My Home Have Smoke Alarms?

In the event of a fire, a smoke alarm can save your life and those of your loved ones. They are a very important means of preventing house and apartment fire fatalities by providing an early warning signal -- so you and your family can escape. Smoke alarms are one of the best safety devices you can buy and install to protect yourself, your family, and your home.

What Types of Smoke Alarms Are Available?

There are many different brands of smoke alarms available on the market but they fall under two basic types: ionization and photoelectric.

Ionization alarms sound more quickly when a flaming, fast moving fire occurs.

Photoelectric alarms are quicker at sensing smoldering, smoky fires. There are also combination smoke alarms that combine ionization and photoelectric into one unit, called **dual sensor smoke alarms**.

Because both ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms are better at detecting distinctly different yet potentially fatal fires, and because homeowners cannot predict what type of fire might start in a home, the USFA recommends the installation of both ionization and photoelectric or dual sensor smoke alarms.

In addition to the basic types of alarms, there are alarms made to meet the needs of people with hearing disabilities. These alarms may use strobe lights that flash and/or vibrate to assist in alerting those who are unable to hear standard smoke alarms when they sound.

Where Do I Put Them?

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement. Many fatal fires begin late at night or in the early morning. For extra safety, install smoke alarms both inside and outside sleeping areas. Since smoke and many deadly gases rise, installing your smoke alarms at the proper level will provide you with the earliest warning possible. Always follow the manufacturer's installation instructions.

Where Would I Get Smoke Alarms?

Many hardware, home supply, or general merchandise stores carry smoke alarms. If you are unsure where to buy one in your community, call your local fire

department (on a nonemergency telephone number) and they will provide you with some suggestions. Some fire departments offer smoke alarms for little or no cost.

Are Smoke Alarms Hard to Install?

If your smoke alarms are hard wired, that is wired into the electrical system, you will need to have a qualified electrician do the initial installation or install replacements. For battery powered smoke alarms, all you will need for installation is a screw driver. Some brands are self adhesive and will easily stick to the wall or ceiling where they are placed. For all smoke alarm installations, be sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions because there are differences between the various brands. If you are uncomfortable standing on a ladder, ask a relative or friend for help. Some fire departments will install a smoke alarm in your home for you. Call your local fire department (on a non-emergency telephone number) if you have problems installing a smoke alarm.

Helpful Tip

Pick a holiday or your birthday and replace the batteries each year on that day.

If your smoke alarm starts making a "chirping" noise, replace the batteries and reset it.

How Do I Keep My Smoke Alarm Working?

If you have a smoke alarm with batteries:

1. Smoke Alarms powered by long-lasting batteries are designed to replace the entire unit according to manufacturer's instructions.
2. In standard type battery powered smoke alarms, the batteries need to be replaced at least once per year and the whole unit should be replaced every 8-10 years.
3. In hard-wired, battery back up smoke alarms, the batteries need to be checked monthly, and replaced at least once per year. The entire unit should be replaced every 8-10 years.

What if the Alarm Goes Off While I'm Cooking?

Then it's doing its job. Do not disable your smoke alarm if it alarms due to cooking or other non-fire causes. You may not remember to put the batteries back in the alarm after cooking. Instead clear the air by waving a towel near the alarm, leaving the batteries in place. The alarm may need to be moved to a new location. Some of the newer models have a "hush" button that silences nuisance alarms.

How Long will my Smoke Alarm Last?

Most alarms installed today have a life span of about 8-10 years. After this time, the entire unit should be replaced. It is a good idea to write the date of purchase with a marker on the inside of your alarm so you will know when to replace it. Some of the newer alarms already have the purchase date written inside. In any event, always follow the manufacturer's instructions for replacement.

Anything Else I Should Know?

Some smoke alarms are considered to be "hard-wired." This means they are connected to the household electrical system and may or may not have battery backup. It's important to test every smoke alarm monthly and replace the batteries with new ones at least once a year.

Escape Planning

More than 4,000 Americans die each year in fires, and approximately 20,000 are injured. Deaths resulting from failed emergency escapes are particularly avoidable.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) believes that having a sound escape plan will greatly reduce fire deaths and protect you and your family's safety if a fire occurs.

Have a Sound Fire Escape Plan

In the event of a fire, remember - time is the biggest enemy and every second counts! Escape plans help you get out of your home quickly. In less than 30 seconds a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for a house to fill with thick black smoke and become engulfed in flames.

Special Considerations

Practice Escaping From Every Room In The Home

Practice escape plans every month. The best plans have two ways to get out of each room. If the primary way is blocked by fire or smoke, you will need a second way out. A secondary route might be a window onto an adjacent roof or using an Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) listed collapsible ladder for escape from upper story windows. Make sure that windows are not stuck, screens can be taken out quickly and that security bars can be properly opened. Also, practice feeling your way out of the house in the dark or with your eyes closed.

Security Bars Require Special Precautions

Security bars may help to keep your family safe from intruders, but they can also trap you in a deadly fire! Windows and doors with security bars must have quick release devices to allow them to be opened immediately in an emergency. Make sure everyone in the family understands and practices how to properly operate and open locked or barred doors and windows.

Immediately Leave The Home

When a fire occurs, do not waste any time saving property. Take the safest exit route, but if you must escape through smoke, remember to crawl low, under the smoke and keep your mouth covered. The smoke contains toxic gases which can disorient you or, at worst, overcome you.

Never Open Doors That Are Hot To The Touch

When you come to a closed door, use the back of your hand to feel the top of the door, the doorknob, and the crack between the door and door frame to make sure that fire is not on the other side. If it feels hot, use your secondary escape route. Even if the door feels cool, open it carefully. Brace your shoulder against the door and open it slowly. If heat and smoke come in, slam the door and make sure it is securely closed, then use your alternate escape route.

Designate A Meeting Place Outside and Take Attendance

Designate a meeting location away from the home, but not necessarily across the street. For example, meet under a specific tree or at the end of the driveway or front sidewalk to make sure everyone has gotten out safely and no one will be hurt looking for someone who is already safe. Designate one person to go to a neighbor's home to phone the fire department.

Once Out, Stay Out

Remember to escape first, then notify the fire department using the 911 system or proper local emergency number in your area. Never go back into a burning building for any reason. Teach children not to hide from firefighters. If someone is missing, tell the firefighters. They are equipped to perform rescues safely.

Finally, having working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home dramatically increases your chances of survival. Smoke alarm batteries need to be tested every month and changed with new ones at least once a year. Also, consider replacing the entire smoke alarm every ten years, or as the manufacturer guidelines recommend.

Residential Fire Sprinklers

Sprinkler Systems in Industry

Schools, office buildings, factories, and other commercial buildings have benefited from fire protection sprinkler systems for over a century. To prevent investments in buildings and machinery, the textile mills in New England began using sprinkler systems over 100 years ago following a series of devastating fires which claimed many lives and destroyed entire businesses.

Sprinklers in Homes

But what about our homes? Although we protect our businesses from fire, what actions do we take to protect our families, our homes, and our possessions from fire? Millions of Americans have installed smoke alarms in their homes in the past few years, but a smoke alarm can only alert the occupants to a fire in the house ... it cannot contain or extinguish a fire. Residential sprinkler systems can!

Sprinklers—The Solution

Fires in residences have taken a high toll of life and property. In 2005 there were:

- 396,000 residential fires
- 3,055 civilian fire deaths
- 13,825 civilian fire injuries
- \$6.9 billion in property damage

Source: National Fire Protection Association Fire Loss in the U.S. During 2005 Abridged Report.

Studies by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's United States Fire Administration indicate that the installation of residential fire sprinkler systems could have saved thousands of lives; prevented a large portion of those injuries; and eliminated hundreds of millions of dollars in property losses.

What Are Home Fire Sprinkler Systems?

Using quick response sprinklers and approved piping, homes can be built or even retrofitted to include low-cost automatic sprinkler systems connected to the domestic water supply.

Sprinkler systems offer advantages to the homebuilder:

A low-cost reliable safety option that would attract many buyers.

Trade-offs between sprinklers and code requirements that can result in lower construction costs, more units per area of land, etc.

For homeowners, the advantages include assurance of a safer environment for their families, protection of their investment and irreplaceable family possessions, and lower insurance rates 5 to 15 percent.

Advantages of Newly Designed Home Sprinkler Systems

Fast Response

Residential sprinklers, listed by Underwriters Labs, are now available. They are designed to respond to a fire much faster than currently available standard commercial and industrial sprinkler systems. The new home sprinklers react automatically to fires more quickly because of their improved sensitivity.

Low Cost

At the present time, cost of a home sprinkler system is targeted at approximately \$1.00 to \$1.50 per square foot in new construction. It is hoped that the cost will decrease as the use of home fire protection grows. It is also possible to retrofit existing homes with sprinkler systems.

Small Size

For residential systems, the sprinklers will be smaller than traditional, commercial, and industrial sprinklers, and can be aesthetically coordinated with any room decor.

Minimal Installation Work

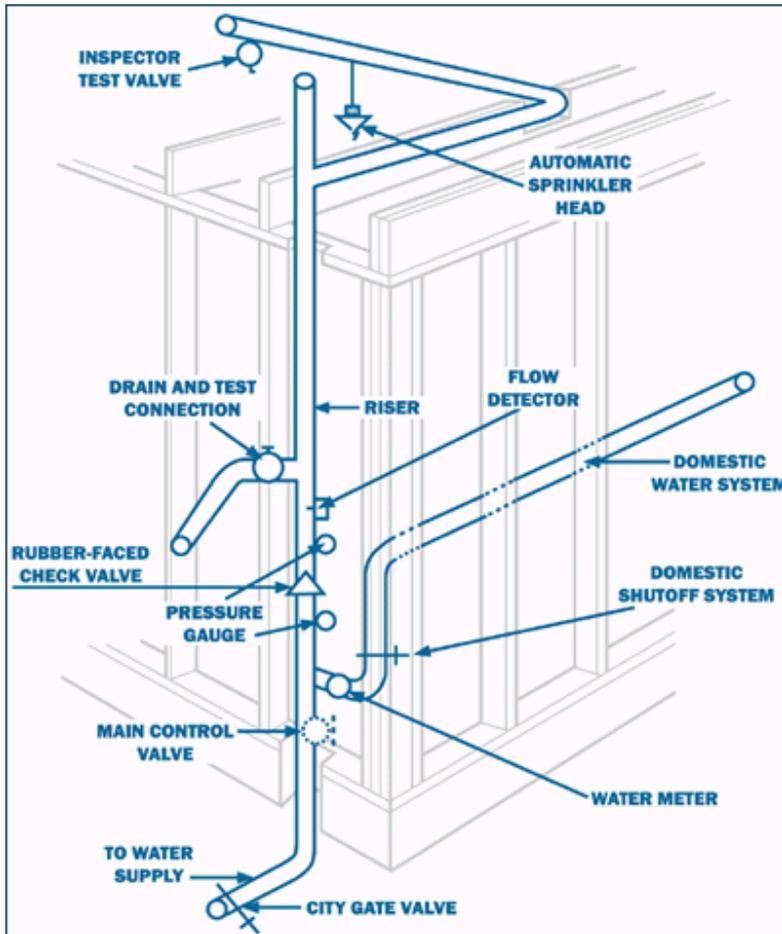
When homes are under construction or being remodeled, a home sprinkler system will require minimal extra piping and labor.

Low Water Requirement

These systems will require less water than the systems installed in industrial or commercial establishments and can be connected to the domestic water supply.

Piping Requirements

In addition to metallic pipe, the use of plastic pipe has brought down the cost of installation in new construction and the retrofit of existing structures.



A Growing Number of Communities Promote Home Fire Sprinklers

The fire loss in this country in residential occupancies is alarming. Manual firefighting methods are not the answer. The way to attack the problem is to limit the fire growth where it occurs in dwellings. We have the technology to do that.

Residential Automatic Sprinkler Systems. Ordinance No. 745; Adopted May 28, 1969; by the San Clemente, California City Council

Proposition 13 was a major factor in promoting the ordinance. There is also a shift within the fire service toward more fire prevention and less suppression emphasis. San Clemente and Corte Madera, California were some of the first communities in the United States to enact a home sprinkler ordinance. Other communities that have initiated or plan to initiate residential sprinkler ordinances include:

- Livermore, California
- Montgomery County, MD
- Long Grove, Illinois
- Chapel Hill, North Carolina

- Germantown, Tennessee
- Scottsdale, Arizona
- Altamonte Springs, Florida

Test Your Home Sprinkler System's I.Q.

Here are five statements about home sprinkler systems. Are they true or false?

1. **When one sprinkler goes off, all the sprinklers activate.**
False! Only the sprinkler over the fire will activate. The sprinkler heads react to temperatures in each room individually. Thus, fire in a bedroom will activate only the sprinkler in that room.
2. **A sprinkler could accidentally go off, causing severe water damage to a home.**
False! Records, which have been compiled for well over 50 years, prove the likelihood of this occurring is very remote. Furthermore, home sprinklers will be specifically designed and will be rigorously tested to minimize such accidents.
3. **Water damage from a sprinkler system will be more extensive than fire damage.**
False! The sprinkler system will severely limit a fire's growth. Therefore, damage from a home sprinkler system will be much less severe than the smoke and fire damage if the fire had gone on unabated or even the water damage caused by water from firefighting hose lines.
4. **Home sprinkler systems are expensive.**
False! Current estimates suggest that when a home is under construction, a home sprinkler system could cost less than 1% of the total building price.
5. **Residential sprinkles are ugly.**
False! The traditional, commercial-type sprinklers as well as sprinklers for home use are now being designed to fit in with most any decor.

Sprinklers Are a Good Investment for Homebuilder's

Through the use of construction trade-offs, homebuilders and developers can achieve reduced construction costs if residential sprinkler systems are installed. Home sprinkler systems offer both safety and financial advantages to homebuyers, a rare combination.

Sprinklers Are a Good Investment for the Homebuyer

A fire occurs in a residential structure every 79 seconds, according to the U.S. Fire Administration. To the homebuilder, this fact means that a large share of potential customers now have knowledge of the terror and destruction caused by fire.

Families with children, senior citizens, and handicapped members have special fire protection needs. Home sprinkler systems provide added protection for these people.

In case of a home fire, firefighters will have less risk of injury or life loss since they will be fighting a fire of less intensity.

Allocation of community resources can be improved with the adoption of home sprinkler technology.

Communities will be able to make better utilization of available land and thereby increase their tax base.

Insurance Discount

Insurance from homeowner underwriters will vary depending on type of coverage. The discounts now range between 5-15%, with a projected increase in available discounts.

The Move Toward Home Sprinkler Systems

The U.S. Fire Administration's research in home fire sprinkler systems successfully focused on systems that would be low cost, fast acting and reliable. As a result, residential fire sprinklers have gained increased acceptance.

In November 1980, the National Fire Protection Association adopted the NFPA 13D Residential Sprinkler installation standard. The standard is based on technical data from the comprehensive full-scale fire tests, which were sponsored by the U.S. Fire Administration.

Residential Sprinkler Program

Dedicated to reducing this Nation's staggering loss of life and property caused by fire, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's U.S. Fire Administration has joined with private industry and the fire service to advance the development of residential sprinklers. Since 1976, the Fire Administration has promoted research studies, development and testing, and demonstrations of residential sprinkler systems.

Candle Fire Safety

Candle Statistics

Candles cause an estimated 15,600 fires in residential structures, 150 deaths, 1,270 injuries, and \$539 million in estimated direct property damage each year.

- Over half (55%) of home candle fires start because the candle is too close to some combustible material.
- More candle fires (38%) begin in the bedroom than in any other room.
- Falling asleep is a factor in 12% of home candle fires and 26% of the associated deaths.
- Half of all civilian candle fire deaths occur between Midnight and 6am.
- December is the peak month for candle fires; Christmas is the peak day.
- Young children and older adults have the highest death risk from candle fires.
- The risk of a fatal candle fire appears higher when candles are used for light.

Source: National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) - Candle Fires, September 2007.

Fact: The majority of candle fires result from human error and negligence.

Candle Fire Safety Tips

- Avoid using lighted candles.
- If you do use candles, ensure they are in sturdy metal, glass, or ceramic holders and placed where they cannot be easily knocked down.
- Keep candles out of the reach of children and pets.
- Set a good example by using matches, lighters, and fire carefully.
- Children should never be allowed to play with matches, lighters or candles.
- Never put candles on a Christmas tree.
- Never leave the house with candles burning.
- Extinguish candles after use.
- Establish a fire-safe home, especially a safe sleeping environment.
- And NEVER leave burning candles unattended!

Cooking Fire Safety

Many families gather in the kitchen to spend time together, but it can be one of the most hazardous rooms in the house if you don't practice safe cooking behaviors. Cooking equipment, most often a range or stovetop, is the leading cause of reported home fires and home fire injuries in the United States. Cooking equipment is also the leading cause of unreported fires and associated injuries.

It's a recipe for serious injury or even death to wear loose clothing (especially hanging sleeves), walk away from a cooking pot on the stove, or leave flammable materials, such as potholders or paper towels, around the stove. Whether you are cooking the family holiday dinner or a snack for the children, practicing safe cooking behaviors will help keep you and your family safe.

Safe Cooking Behaviors

Choose the Right Equipment and Use It Properly

- Always use cooking equipment tested and approved by a recognized testing facility.
- Follow manufacturers' instructions and code requirements when installing and operating cooking equipment.
- Plug microwave ovens and other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance, as it can overload the circuit and cause a fire.

Use Barbecue Grills Safely

- Position the grill well away from siding, deck railings, and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas, and foot traffic.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area by declaring a 3-foot "kid-free zone" around the grill.
- Put out several long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames when cooking food.
- Periodically remove grease or fat buildup in trays below grill so it cannot be ignited by a hot grill.
- Use only outdoors! If used indoors, or in any enclosed spaces, such as tents, barbecue grills pose both a fire hazard and the risk of exposing occupants to carbon monoxide.

Charcoal Grills

Purchase the proper starter fluid and store out of reach of children and away from heat sources.

Never add charcoal starter fluid when coals or kindling have already been ignited, and never use any flammable or combustible liquid other than charcoal starter fluid to get the fire going.

Propane Grills

- Check the propane cylinder hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. A light soap and water solution applied to the hose will reveal escaping propane quickly by releasing bubbles.
- If you determined your grill has a gas leak by smell or the soapy bubble test and there is no flame:
 - Turn off the propane tank and grill.
 - If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again.
 - If the leak does not stop, call the fire department.
- If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not attempt to move the grill.
- All propane cylinders manufactured after April 2002 must have overfill protection devices (OPD). OPDs shut off the flow of propane before capacity is reached, limiting the potential for release of propane gas if the cylinder heats up. OPDs are easily identified by their triangular-shaped hand wheel.
- Use only equipment bearing the mark of an independent testing laboratory. Follow the manufacturers' instructions on how to set up the grill and maintain it.
- Never store propane cylinders in buildings or garages. If you store a gas grill inside during the winter, disconnect the cylinder and leave it outside.

Watch What You Heat

- The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
- Stay alert! To prevent cooking fires, you have to be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.

Keep Things That Can Catch Fire and Heat Sources Apart

- Keep anything that can catch fire - potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels, or curtains - away from your stovetop.
- Keep the stovetop, burners, and oven clean.
- Keep pets off cooking surfaces and nearby countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto the burner.

- Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire if it comes into contact with a gas flame or electric burner.

If Your Clothes Catch Fire

If your clothes catch fire, stop, drop, and roll. Stop immediately, drop to the ground, and cover face with hands. Roll over and over or back and forth to put out the fire. Immediately cool the burn with cool water for 3 to 5 minutes and then seek emergency medical care.

Use Equipment for Intended Purposes Only

Cook only with equipment designed and intended for cooking, and heat your home only with equipment designed and intended for heating. There is additional danger of fire, injury, or death if equipment is used for a purpose for which it was not intended.

Protect Children from Scalds and Burns

- Young children are at high risk of being burned by hot food and liquids. Keep children away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet (1 meter) around the stove.
- Keep young children at least 3 feet (1 meter) away from any place where hot food or drink is being prepared or carried. Keep hot foods and liquids away from table and counter edges.
- When young children are present, use the stove's back burners whenever possible.
- Never hold a child while cooking, drinking, or carrying hot foods or liquids.
- Teach children that hot things burn.
- When children are old enough, teach them to cook safely. Supervise them closely.

Prevent Scalds and Burns

- To prevent spills due to overturn of appliances containing hot food or liquids, use the back burner when possible and/or turn pot handles away from the stove's edge. All appliance cords need to be kept coiled and away from counter edges.
- Use oven mitts or potholders when moving hot food from ovens, microwave ovens, or stovetops. Never use wet oven mitts or potholders as they can cause scald burns.
- Replace old or worn oven mitts.
- Treat a burn right away, putting it in cool water. Cool the burn for 3 to 5 minutes. If the burn is bigger than your fist or if you have any questions about how to treat it, seek medical attention right away.

Install and Use Microwave Ovens Safely

- Place or install the microwave oven at a safe height, within easy reach of all users. The face of the person using the microwave oven should always be higher than the front of the microwave oven door. This is to prevent hot food or liquid from spilling onto a user's face or body from above and to prevent the microwave oven itself from falling onto a user.
- Never use aluminum foil or metal objects in a microwave oven. They can cause a fire and damage the oven.
- Heat food only in containers or dishes that are safe for microwave use.
- Open heated food containers slowly away from the face to avoid steam burns. Hot steam escaping from the container or food can cause burns.
- Foods heat unevenly in microwave ovens. Stir and test before eating.

How and When to Fight Cooking Fires

- When in doubt, just get out. When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number after you leave.
- If you do try to fight the fire, be sure others are already getting out and you have a clear path to the exit.
- Always keep an oven mitt and a lid nearby when you are cooking. If a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan (make sure you are wearing the oven mitt). Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan. To keep the fire from restarting, leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.
- In case of an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you or your clothing.
- If you have a fire in your microwave oven, turn it off immediately and keep the door closed. Never open the door until the fire is completely out. Unplug the appliance if you can safely reach the outlet.
- After a fire, both ovens and microwaves should be checked and/or serviced before being used again.

Nuisance Smoke Alarms

- Move smoke alarms farther away from kitchens according to manufacturers' instructions and/or install a smoke alarm with a pause button.
- If a smoke alarm sounds during normal cooking, press the pause button if the smoke alarm has one. Open the door or window or fan the area with a towel to get the air moving. Do not disable the smoke alarm or take out the batteries.
- Treat every smoke alarm activation as a likely fire and react quickly and safely to the alarm.

Heating Fire Safety

Each year fire claims the lives of 4,000 Americans, injures 20,000, and causes billions of dollars worth of damage. People living in rural areas are more than twice as likely to die in a fire than those living in mid-sized cities or suburban areas. The misuse of wood stoves, portable space heaters and kerosene heaters are especially common risks in rural areas.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) believes rural fire problems can be reduced by teaching people to recognize the hazards. By following some of the outlined precautionary steps, individuals can greatly reduce their chances of becoming a fire casualty.

Wood Stoves

Wood stoves cause over 4,000 residential fires every year. Carefully follow the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions. Look for solid construction, such as plate steel or cast iron metal. Check for cracks and inspect legs, hinges and door seals for smooth joints and seams. Use only seasoned wood for fuel, not green wood, artificial logs, or trash. Inspect and clean your pipes and chimneys annually and check monthly for damage or obstructions. Be sure to keep combustible objects at least three feet away from your wood stove.

Electric Space Heaters

Buy only heaters with the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) safety listing. Check to make sure it has a thermostat control mechanism, and will switch off automatically if the heater falls over. Heaters are not dryers or tables; don't dry clothes or store objects on top of your heater. Space heaters need space; keep combustibles at least three feet away from each heater. Always unplug your electric space heater when not in use.

Kerosene Heaters

Buy only UL-listed heaters and check with your local fire department on the legality of kerosene heater use in your community. Never fill your heater with gasoline or camp stove fuel; both flare-up easily. Only use crystal clear K-1 kerosene. Never overfill any portable heater. Use the kerosene heater in a well ventilated room.

Fireplaces

Fireplaces regularly build up creosote in their chimneys. They need to be cleaned out frequently and chimneys should be inspected for obstructions and cracks to prevent deadly chimney and roof fires. Check to make sure the damper is open before starting any fire. Never burn trash, paper or green wood in your fireplace. These materials cause heavy creosote buildup and are difficult to control. Use a screen heavy enough to stop

rolling logs and big enough to cover the entire opening of the fireplace to catch flying sparks. Don't wear loose-fitting clothes near any open flame. Make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the house or going to bed. Store cooled ashes in a tightly sealed metal container outside the home.

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

Keep Fireplaces and Wood Stoves Clean

- Have your chimney or wood stove inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces. Leave glass doors open while burning a fire.
- Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue temperatures.
- Keep air inlets on wood stoves open, and never restrict air supply to fireplaces. Otherwise you may cause creosote buildup that could lead to a chimney fire.
- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around wood stoves.

Safely Burn Fuels

- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Use only seasoned hardwood. Soft, moist wood accelerates creosote buildup.
- Build small fires that burn completely and produce less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris in your fireplace or wood stove.
- When building a fire, place logs at the rear of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Soak hot ashes in water and place them in a metal container outside your home.

Protect the Outside of Your Home

- Stack firewood outdoors at least 30 feet away from your home.
- Keep the roof clear of leaves, pine needles and other debris.
- Cover the chimney with a mesh screen spark arrester.
- Remove branches hanging above the chimney, flues or vents.

Protect the Inside of Your Home

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Consider installing the new long life smoke alarms.
- Provide proper venting systems for all heating equipment.
- Extend all vent pipes at least three feet above the roof.

Electrical Fire Safety

Electrical fires in our homes claim the lives of 485 Americans each year and injure 2,305 more. Some of these fires are caused by electrical system failures and appliance defects, but many more are caused by the misuse and poor maintenance of electrical appliances, incorrectly installed wiring, and overloaded circuits and extension cords.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) would like consumers to know that there are simple steps you can take to prevent the loss of life and property resulting from electrical fires.

The Problem

During a typical year, home electrical problems account for 67,800 fires, 485 deaths, and \$868 million in property losses. Home electrical wiring causes twice as many fires as electrical appliances.

The Facts

December is the most dangerous month for electrical fires. Fire deaths are highest in winter months which call for more indoor activities and increase in lighting, heating, and appliance use. Most electrical wiring fires start in the bedroom.

The Cause

Electrical Wiring

Most electrical fires result from problems with "fixed wiring" such as faulty electrical outlets and old wiring. Problems with cords and plugs, such as extension and appliance cords, also cause many home electrical fires.

In urban areas, faulty wiring accounts for 33% of residential electrical fires.

Many avoidable electrical fires can be traced to misuse of electric cords, such as overloading circuits, poor maintenance and running the cords under rugs or in high traffic areas.

Home Appliances

The home appliances most often involved in electrical fires are electric stoves and ovens, dryers, central heating units, televisions, radios and record players.

Safety Precautions

- Routinely check your electrical appliances and wiring.
- Frayed wires can cause fires. Replace all worn, old or damaged appliance cords immediately.
- Use electrical extension cords wisely and don't overload them.
- Keep electrical appliances away from wet floors and counters; pay special care to electrical appliances in the bathroom and kitchen.

- When buying electrical appliances look for products which meet the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) standard for safety.
- Don't allow children to play with or around electrical appliances like space heaters, irons and hair dryers.
- Keep clothes, curtains and other potentially combustible items at least three feet from all heaters.
- If an appliance has a three-prong plug, use it only in a three-slot outlet. Never force it to fit into a two-slot outlet or extension cord.
- Never overload extension cords or wall sockets. Immediately shut off, then professionally replace, light switches that are hot to the touch and lights that flicker. Use safety closures to "child-proof" electrical outlets.
- Check your electrical tools regularly for signs of wear. If the cords are frayed or cracked, replace them. Replace any tool if it causes even small electrical shocks, overheats, shorts out or gives off smoke or sparks.

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

Smoking Fire Safety

Every year, almost 1,000 smokers and non-smokers are killed in home fires caused by cigarettes and other smoking materials. The U.S. Fire Administration is working to help prevent home fire deaths and injuries caused by smoking materials. Fires caused by cigarettes and other smoking materials are *preventable*. You *can* make a difference!

If you smoke or live with someone who smokes, learn the facts. A lit cigarette accidentally dropped onto a chair or bed, or hot cigarette ashes or matches tossed away before they are completely out, can cause a large fire in seconds.

Putting out a cigarette the right way only takes seconds, too. It is up to you to make sure your cigarette is put out, all the way, every time.

One-in-four people killed in home fires is not the smoker whose cigarette caused the fire.

- More than one third were children of the smokers.
- Twenty-five percent were neighbors or friends of the smokers.

Smoking & Home Fire Action Steps

- If you smoke, smoke outside.
- Wherever you smoke, use deep, sturdy ashtrays.
- Make sure cigarettes and ashes are out.
- Check for cigarette butts.
- Never smoke in a home where oxygen is used.
- If you smoke, fire-safe cigarettes are better.
- Be alert!

Bedroom Fire Safety

Each year, fire claims the lives of 4,000 Americans and injures approximately 20,000. Bedrooms are a common area of fire origin. Nearly 600 lives are lost to fires that start in bedrooms. Many of these fires are caused by misuse or poor maintenance of electrical devices, such as overloading extension cords or using portable space heaters too close to combustibles. Many other bedroom fires are caused by children who play with matches and lighters, careless smoking among adults, and arson.

Kids and Fire: A Bad Match

Children are one of the highest risk groups for deaths in residential fires. At home, children usually play with fire - lighters, matches and other ignitables - in bedrooms, in closets, and under beds. These are "secret" places where there are a lot of things that catch fire easily.

- Children of all ages set over 35,000 fires annually.
- Every year over 400 children nine years and younger die in home fires.
- Keep matches and lighters locked up and away from children. Check under beds and in closets for burnt matches, evidence your child may be playing with matches.
- Teach your child that fire is a tool, not a toy.

Appliances Need Special Attention

Bedrooms are the most common room in the home where electrical fires start. Electrical fires are a special concern during winter months which call for more indoor activities and increases in lighting, heating, and appliance use.

- Do not trap electric cords against walls where heat can build up.
- Take extra care when using portable heaters. Keep bedding, clothes, curtains and other combustible items at least three feet away from space heaters.
- Only use lab-approved electric blankets and warmers. Check to make sure the cords are not frayed.

Tuck Yourself In For A Safe Sleep

- Never smoke in bed.
- Replace mattresses made before the 2007 Federal Mattress Flammability Standard. Mattresses made since then are required by law to be safer.

Finally, having working smoke alarms dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. Place at least one smoke alarm on each level of your home and in halls outside bedrooms. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

Holiday Fire Safety

Each year fires occurring during the holiday season claim the lives of over 400 people, injure 1,650 more, and cause over \$990 million in damage. According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA), there are simple life-saving steps you can take to ensure a safe and happy holiday. By following some of the outlined precautionary tips, individuals can greatly reduce their chances of becoming a holiday fire casualty.

Preventing Christmas Tree Fires

Water That Tree!

What's a holiday party or even the traditional Christmas morning scene itself without a beautifully decorated tree? If your household, as those of more than 33 million other American homes, includes a natural tree in its festivities, take to heart the sales person's suggestion—"Keep the tree watered." That's good advice and not just to create a fragrant indoor winter wonderland atmosphere. Christmas trees account for 200 fires annually, resulting in 6 deaths, 25 injuries and more than \$6 million in property damage. Typically shorts in electrical lights or open flames from candles, lighters or matches start tree fires. Well-watered trees are not a problem. Dry and neglected trees can be.

The [Building and Fire Research Laboratory](#) of the National Institute of Standards and Technology performed a that illustrates what happens when fire touches a dry tree. Within three seconds of ignition, the dry Scotch pine is completely ablaze. At five seconds, the fire extends up the tree and black smoke with searing gases streaks across the ceiling. Fresh air near the floor feeds the fire. The sofa, coffee table and the carpet ignite prior to any flame contact. Within 40 seconds "flashover" occurs - that's when an entire room erupts into flames, oxygen is depleted and dense, deadly toxic smoke engulfs the scene.

Wet trees tell a different story. For comparative purposes, the NIST fire safety engineers selected a green Scotch pine, had it cut in their presence, had an additional two inches cut from the trunk's bottom, and placed the tree in a stand with at least a 7.6 liter water capacity. The researchers maintained the Scotch pine's water on a daily basis. A single match could not ignite the tree. A second attempt in which an electric current ignited an entire matchbook failed to fire the tree. Finally they applied an open flame to the tree using a propane torch. The branches ignited briefly, but self-extinguished when the researchers removed the torch from the branches. As NIST fire safety engineers say: **REMEMBER, A WET TREE IS A SAFE TREE!**

- **Selecting a Tree for the Holiday**

Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on

the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out, and is a fire hazard.

- **Caring for Your Tree**
Do not place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.
- **Disposing of Your Tree**
Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or woodburning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

Holiday Lights

- **Maintain Your Holiday Lights**
Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory.
- **Do Not Overload Electrical Outlets**
Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet. Make sure to periodically check the wires - they should not be warm to the touch.
- **Do Not Leave Holiday Lights on Unattended**

Holiday Decorations

- **Use Only Nonflammable Decorations**
All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents.
- **Never Put Wrapping Paper in a Fireplace**
It can result in a very large fire, throwing off dangerous sparks and embers and may result in a chimney fire.
- **Artificial Christmas Trees**
If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

Candle Care

- **Avoid Using Lit Candles**
If you do use them, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. Never leave the house with candles burning.
- **Never Put Lit Candles on a Tree**
Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame - candles, lighters or matches.

Fireworks Safety

- The best way to enjoy fireworks is to visit public fireworks displays put on by professionals who know how to safely handle fireworks.
- If you plan to use fireworks, make sure they are legal in your area.
- Never light fireworks indoors or near dry grass.
- Always have a bucket of water and/or a fire extinguisher nearby. Know how to operate the fire extinguisher properly.
- Do not wear loose clothing while using fireworks.
- Stand several feet away from lit fireworks. If a device does not go off, do not stand over it to investigate it. Put it out with water and dispose of it.
- Always read the directions and warning labels on fireworks. If a device is not marked with the contents, direction and a warning label, do not light it.
- Supervise children around fireworks at all times.

Manufactured Home Fire Safety

Fires in manufactured homes claim the lives of 345 Americans each year and injure 765 more. Many of these fires are caused by heating and electrical system malfunctions and improper storage of combustibles.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) would like consumers to know that there are simple steps you can take to prevent the loss of life and property in home fires.

The Problem

During a typical year, manufactured homes account for 17,700 fires, hundreds of deaths and \$155 million in property losses. Manufactured homes have a fire death rate per 100,000 housing units 32-50 percent higher than the rate for other dwellings.

The Facts

Young children account for more than one-fifth of all fire deaths in manufactured homes. A recent study of rural fires showed that smoke alarms were less likely to be present or operating in manufactured homes.

The Cause

Electrical system malfunctions and heating fires are the leading causes of fire in manufactured homes. Together, they account for one-third of manufactured housing fires. Electrical distribution fires occur nearly twice as often in manufactured homes as in one- and two-family dwellings.

Safety Precautions

- Have a minimum of two smoke alarms installed in your home regardless of sleeping space arrangements.
- Install smoke alarms in accordance with smoke alarm manufacturer guidelines. Test your smoke alarms once a month and replace the batteries at least once a year.
- Maintain your home heating system by having it serviced at least once a year by a professional.
- Do not store combustibles or flammables near heat sources.
- Never overload outlets, extension cords or electrical circuits. If the circuit breaker trips or fuses blow, immediately call a licensed electrician to check your system.
- Have an escape plan and practice escape routes with your family.
- Space heaters need their space. Do not place portable space heaters close to drapes, clothing or other combustible materials.
- Install skirting material to keep leaves and other debris and combustible items from blowing under your manufactured home.

- When considering a new home, ask if residential sprinklers are available as an option.
- If there is a fire - get out immediately, go to a neighbor's and notify the fire department using the 911 system or the proper local emergency number in your area.

Planning Emergency Escape From Your Manufactured Home

Smoke Alarms are Life Savers

The primary fire safety strategy for any home is to warn the occupants early. The best way to get the earliest warning of danger is by installing enough smoke alarms. Homes should have a smoke alarm near the bedrooms, but not so close to the kitchen that you have problems with alarms from cooking. It's a good idea to have a smoke alarm in each bedroom, especially if you sleep with the door closed.

Planning Your Escape

The other part of the fire safety plan is for everyone to get out quickly. When you are awakened in the middle of the night to a fire, your thinking may be confused, so it is important that you practice your escape plan ahead of time. That way, your whole family will know what to do. Manufactured homes have more ways to escape than most other homes. There are always two doors, and every bedroom has an emergency escape window. Make sure that everyone knows how to open the emergency windows so no time is wasted when fire strikes. These windows are labeled with operating instructions. Everyone in the family, as well as frequent visitors and babysitters, should practice the escape plan, including opening the escape windows.

Can You Beat the Clock?

Most people do not realize how quickly fires can grow. A home fire can become a killer in as little as 3 minutes. Can your family get out this fast? Consider that it may take one minute for the smoke alarm to sound and for you to recognize the danger. If you have young children or you are elderly and move more slowly, you may need another minute to get ready. This leaves only 1 minute for you all to get to an exit, open it, and get out. By practicing your escape, you can make every second count.

Steps to a Safe Escape

1. Have at least two working smoke alarms, test them monthly.
2. Plan two ways out of every room.
3. Practice your escape plan twice yearly.
4. Practice crawling low under smoke.
5. Have a pre-arranged meeting place outside your home.
6. Call the fire department from a neighbor's home.
7. Once outside, stay out.

Rural Fire Safety

A move from an urban center to a suburb or rural area requires you to rethink fire safety. First, you must be aware of special fire hazards near wooded areas. Second, geographic location may create longer response times for fire and rescue services.

If you live in the rural-urban interface, the point where homes meet combustible vegetation, you must increase your role to protect lives and property in your community beyond the city limits.

Fire Facts about Rural Living

- Once a fire starts outdoors in a rural area, it is often hard to control. Wildland firefighters are trained to protect natural resources, not homes and buildings.
- Many homes are located far from fire stations. The result is longer emergency response times. Within a matter of minutes, an entire home may be destroyed by fire.
- Limited water supply in rural areas can make fire suppression difficult.
- Homes may be secluded and surrounded by woods, dense brush and combustible vegetation that fuel fires.

Tips For Making Your Property Fire Resistant

- Keep lawns trimmed, leaves raked, and the roof and rain-gutters free from debris such as dead limbs and leaves.
- Stack firewood at least 30 feet away from your home.
- Store flammable materials, liquids and solvents in metal containers outside the home at least 30 feet away from structures and wooden fences.
- Create defensible space by thinning trees and brush within 30 feet around your home.
- Landscape your property with fire resistant plants and vegetation to prevent fire from spreading quickly.
- Post home address signs that are clearly visible from the road.
- Provide emergency vehicle access with properly constructed driveways and roadways, at least 12 feet wide with adequate turnaround space.
- Make sure water sources, such as hydrants and ponds, are accessible to the fire department.
- Burning yard waste is a fire hazard. Check with your local fire agency on a non-emergency number for fire permit requirements and restricted burning times.

Protect Your Home

- Use fire resistant, protective roofing and materials like stone, brick and metal to protect your home. Avoid using wood materials that offer the least fire protection.

- Cover all exterior vents, attics and eaves with metal mesh screens no larger than 6 millimeters.
- Install multipane windows, tempered safety glass or fireproof shutters to protect large windows from radiant heat.
- Use fire-resistant draperies for added window protection.
- Have chimneys, wood stoves and all home heating systems inspected and cleaned annually by a certified specialist.

Prepare Your Family

- Know how to contact fire emergency services in your area.
- Plan ahead. Make sure you and your family are prepared for a fire emergency.
- Develop and practice escape and evacuation plans with your family.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Consider installing the new long-life smoke alarms.

Defensible Space Works

During the 2003 raging California fires, a number of homes were saved as a result of the owners' careful pruning and landscaping techniques that protected their homes. In a fire situation, the dead trees and shrubs surrounding your home act as fuel for fire. Removing flammable vegetation reduces the threat of fire. Follow these basic rules to create defensible space that works.

- Remove all dead plants, trees and shrubs from the site.
- Reduce excess leaves, plant parts and low-hanging branches.
- Replace dense flammable plants with fire-resistant plants.
- The choice of plants, spacing and maintenance are crucial elements in any defensible space landscaping plan.

Tips for a Fire-safe Landscape

- Create a defensible space perimeter by thinning trees and brush within 30 feet around your home.
- Beyond 30 feet, remove dead wood, debris and low tree branches.
- Eliminate small trees and plants growing under trees. They allow ground fires to jump into tree crowns.
- Space trees 30 feet apart and prune to a height of 8 to 10 feet.
- Place shrubs at least 20 feet from any structures and prune regularly.
- Plant the most drought-tolerant vegetation within three feet of your home and adjacent to structures to prevent ignition.
- Provide at least a 10 to 15 foot separation between islands of shrubs and plant groups to effectively break-up continuity of vegetation.
- Landscape your property with fire-resistant plants and vegetation to prevent fire from spreading quickly.

Choose Fire Resistant Materials

- Check your local nursery or county extension service for advice on fire resistant plants that are suited for your environment.
- Create fire-safe zones with stone walls, patios, swimming pools, decks and roadways.
- Use rock, mulch, flower beds and gardens as ground cover for bare spaces and as effective firebreaks.
- There are no "fire-proof" plants. Select high moisture plants that grow close to the ground and have a low sap or resin content.
- Choose plant species that resist ignition such as rockrose, iceplant and aloe.
- Fire-resistant shrubs include hedging roses, bush honeysuckles, currant, cotoneaster, sumac and shrub apples.
- Plant hardwood, maple, poplar and cherry trees that are less flammable than pine, fir and other conifers.

Maintain Your Home and Surrounding Property

- Maintain a well-pruned and watered landscape to serve as a green belt and protection against fire.
- Keep plants green during the dry season and use supplemental irrigation, if necessary.
- Trim grass on a regular basis up to 100 feet surrounding your home.
- Stack firewood at least 30 feet from your home.
- Store flammable materials, liquids and solvents in metal containers outside the home at least 30 feet away from structures and wooden fences.
- No matter where you live, always install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Consider installing the new long-life smoke alarms.

Follow Local Burning Laws

- Do not burn trash or other debris without proper knowledge of local burning laws, techniques and the safest times of day and year to burn.
- Before burning debris in a wooded area, make sure you notify local authorities and obtain a burning permit.
- Use an approved incinerator with a safety lid or covering with holes no larger than 3/4 inches.
- Create at least a 10 foot clearing around the incinerator before burning debris.

After A Fire

The First 24 Hours

Contact your local disaster relief service, such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army, to help with your immediate needs, such as:

- temporary housing
- food
- medicine
- eyeglasses
- clothing
- other essential items

Contact your insurance agent/company.

Cautions!!!

Do not enter the damaged site. Fires can rekindle from hidden, smoldering remains.

Normally, the fire department will see that utilities (water, electricity and natural gas) are either safe to use or are disconnected before they leave the site. Do not attempt to turn on utilities yourself.

Be watchful for structural damage caused by the fire. Roofs and floors may be damaged and subject to collapse.

Food, beverages and medicine exposed to heat, smoke, soot and water should not be consumed.

Leaving Your Home

Contact your local police departments to let them know the site will be unoccupied.

In some cases it may be necessary to board up openings to discourage trespassers.

Beginning immediately, save receipts for any money you spend. These receipts are important in showing the insurance company what money you have spent related to your fire loss and also for verifying losses claimed on your income tax.

If it is safe to do so, try to locate the following items:

- identification, such as driver's licenses and Social Security cards
- insurance information

- medication information
- eyeglasses, hearing aids or other prosthetic devices
- valuables, such as credit cards, bank books, cash and jewelry

There are many people/entities that should be notified of your relocation, including:

- your insurance agent/company
- your mortgage company (also inform them of the fire)
- your family and friends
- your employer
- your child's school
- your post office
- any delivery services
- your fire and police departments
- our utility companies

Do not throw away any damaged goods until after an inventory is made. All damages are taken into consideration in developing your insurance claim.

If you are considering contracting for inventory or repair services discuss your plans with your insurance agent/company first.

Insured and Not insured

Insured

Give notice of the loss to the insurance company or the insurer's agent/company.

Ask the insurance company what to do about the immediate needs of the dwelling, such as covering doors, windows, and other exposed areas, and pumping out water.

Ask your insurance agent/company what actions are required of you. Some policyholders may be required to make an inventory of damaged personal property showing in detail the quantity, description and how much you paid for the items.

Not Insured

Your recovery from a fire loss may be based upon your own resources and help from your community.

Private organizations that may be sources of aid or information:

- American Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- religious organizations
- department of social services
- civic organizations
- state or municipal emergency services office
- non-profit crisis counseling centers

Valuing Your Property

You will encounter different viewpoints on the value of your property in adjusting your fire loss or in claiming a casualty loss on your federal income tax. Knowing the following terms will help you understand the process used to determine the value of your fire loss:

- **Your personal valuation:** Your personal loss of goods through fire may be difficult to measure. These personal items have SENTIMENTAL VALUE to you; however, it is objective measures of value that you, the insurer, and the Internal Revenue Service will use as a common ground for discussion. Some of these objective measures are discussed below.
- **Cost when purchased:** This is an important element in establishing an item's final value. Receipts will help verify the cost price.
- **Fair market value before the fire:** This concept is also expressed as ACTUAL CASH VALUE. This is what you could have received for the item if you had sold it the day before the fire. The price would reflect its cost at purchase minus the wear it had sustained since purchase. Depreciation is the formal term used to express the amount of value an item loses over a period of time.
- **Value after the fire:** This is sometimes called the item's salvage value.

Restoration Services

There are companies that specialize in the restoration of fire damaged structures. Whether you or your insurer employs this type of service, be clear of who will pay. Be sure to request an estimate of cost for the work. Before any company is hired check their references. These companies provide a range of services that may include some or all of the following:

- securing the site against further damage
- estimating structural damage
- repairing structural damage
- estimating the cost to repair or renew items of personal property
- packing, transportation, and storage of household items
- securing appropriate cleaning or repair subcontractors
- storing repaired items until needed

Replacing Documents

Replacement Documents and Contact Information

ITEM	WHO TO CONTACT
Driver's license, Auto registration	Department of motor vehicles
Bank books (checking, savings, etc.)	Your bank, as soon as possible
Insurance policies	Your insurance agent
Military discharge papers	Department of Veterans Affairs
Passports	Passport service
Birth, death and marriage certificates	Bureau of Records in the appropriate state
Divorce papers	Circuit court where decree was issued
Social Security or Medicare cards	Local Social Security office
Credit cards	The issuing companies, as soon as possible
Titles to deeds	Records department of the locality in which the property is located
Stocks and bonds	Issuing company or your broker
Wills	Your lawyer
Medical records	Your doctor
Warranties	Issuing company
Income tax records	The IRS Center where filed or your accountant
Citizenship papers	U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service
Prepaid burial contract	Issuing company
Animal registration papers	Humane Society
Mortgage papers	Lending institution

Salvage Hints

Professional fire and water damage restoration businesses may be the best source of cleaning and restoring your personal belongings. Companies offering this service can be located in the phone directory.

Clothing

A word of caution before you begin: test garments before using any treatment, and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Several of the cleaning mixtures described in this section contain the substance Tri-Sodium Phosphate. This substance can be purchased under the generic name TSP. Tri-Sodium Phosphate is a caustic substance used commonly as a cleaning agent. It should be used with care and stored out of reach of children and pets. Wear rubber gloves when using if you have sensitive skin. Read the label for further information.

Smoke odor and soot sometimes can be washed from clothing. The following formula may work for clothing that can be bleached:

4 to 6 tbsp. Tri-Sodium Phosphate;

1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach: and

1 gallon warm water. Mix well, add clothes, rinse with clear water. Dry thoroughly.

An effective way to remove mildew from clothing is to wash the fresh stain with soap and warm water, rinse, and then dry in the sun. If the stain has not disappeared, use lemon juice and salt or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach.

Cooking Utensils

Your pots, pans, flatware, etc., should be washed with soapy water, rinsed, and then polished with a fine-powdered cleaner. You can polish copper and brass with special polish, salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar.

Electrical Appliances

Don't use appliances that have been exposed to water or steam until you have a service representative check them. This is especially true of electrical appliances. In addition, steam can remove the lubricant from some moving parts.

If the fire department turned off your gas or power during the fire, call the electric or gas company to restore these services—do not try to do it yourself.

Food

Wash your canned goods in detergent and water. Do the same for food in jars. If labels come off, be sure you mark the contents on the can or jar with a grease pencil. Do not use canned goods when the cans have bulged or rusted. Do not refreeze frozen food that has thawed.

To remove odor from your refrigerator or freezer, wash the inside with a solution of baking soda and water, or use one cup of vinegar or household ammonia to one gallon of water. Baking soda in an open container or a piece of charcoal also can be placed in the refrigerator or freezer to absorb odor.

Rugs and Carpets

Rugs and carpets should be allowed to dry thoroughly. Throw rugs can be cleaned by beating, sweeping, or vacuuming, and then shampooing. Rugs should be dried as quickly as possible—lay them flat and expose them to warm, circulated, dry air. A fan turned on the rugs will speed drying. Make sure the rugs are thoroughly dry. Even though the surface seems dry, moisture remaining at the base of the tufts can quickly cause the rug to rot. For information on cleaning and preserving carpets, call your carpet dealer or installer or a qualified carpet cleaning professional.

Leather and Books

Wipe leather goods with a damp cloth, then a dry cloth. Stuff purses and shoes with newspaper to retain shape. Leave suitcases open. Leather goods should be dried away from heat and sun. When leather goods are dry, clean with saddle soap. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat and sun.

Wet books must be taken care of as soon as possible. The best method to save wet books is to freeze them in a vacuum freezer. This special freezer will remove the moisture without damaging the pages.

If there will be a delay in locating such a freezer, place them in a normal freezer until a vacuum freezer can be located.

A local librarian also can be a good resource.

Locks and Hinges

Locks (especially iron locks) should be taken apart and wiped with oil. If locks cannot be removed, squirt machine oil through a bolt opening or keyhole, and work the knob to distribute the oil. Hinges also should be thoroughly cleaned and oiled.

Walls, Floors and Furniture

To remove soot and smoke from walls, floors, and furniture use a mild soap or detergent or mix together the following solution:

4 to 6 tbsp. Tri-Sodium Phosphate;

1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach; and

1 gallon warm water.

Wear rubber gloves when cleaning with this solution. Be sure to rinse your walls and furniture with clear warm water and dry thoroughly after washing them with this solution.

Wash a small area at one time, working from the floor up. Then rinse the wall with clear water immediately. Ceilings should be washed last.

Do not repaint until walls and ceilings are completely dry.

Your wallpaper also can be repaired. Use a commercial paste to repaste a loose edge or section. Contact your wallpaper dealer or installer for information on wallpaper cleaners. Washable wallpaper can be cleansed like any ordinary wall, but take care not to soak the paper. Work from bottom to top to prevent streaking.

Wood Furniture

Do not dry your furniture in the sun. The wood will warp and twist out of shape.

Clear off mud and dirt.

Remove drawers. Let them dry thoroughly so there will be no sticking when you replace them.

Scrub wood furniture or fixtures with a stiff brush and a cleaning solution.

Wet wood can decay and mold, so dry thoroughly. Open doors and windows for good ventilation. Turn on your furnace or air conditioner, if necessary.

If mold forms, wipe the wood with a cloth soaked in a mixture of borax dissolved in hot water.

To remove white spots or film, rub the wood surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of 1/2 cup household ammonia and 1/2 cup water. Then wipe the surface dry and polish with wax or rub the surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of 1/2 cup turpentine and 1/2 cup linseed oil. Be careful—turpentine is flammable (depending on turpentine's flashpoint).

You can also rub the wood surface with a fine-grade steel wool pad dipped in liquid polishing wax, clean the area with a soft cloth, and then buff.

Money Replacement

Handle burned money as little as possible. Attempt to encase each bill or portion of a bill in plastic wrap for preservation. If money is only half-burned or less (if half or more is still intact), you can take the remainder to your regional Federal Reserve Bank for replacement. Ask your bank for the nearest one. Or you can mail the burned or torn money by "registered mail, return receipt requested" to

Department of the Treasury
Bureau of Engraving and Printing
Office of Currency Standards
P.O. Box 37048
Washington, DC 20013

Mutilated or melted coins can be taken to your regional Federal Reserve Bank or mailed by "registered mail, return receipt requested" to:

Superintendent
U.S. Mint
P.O. Box 400
Philadelphia, PA 19105

If your U.S. Savings Bonds have been destroyed or mutilated, you must obtain Department of Treasury Form PD F 1048 (I) from your bank or www.ustreas.gov and mail to:

Department of the Treasury
Bureau of the Public Debt
Savings Bonds Operations
P.O. Box 1328
Parkersburg, WV 26106-1328

Tax Information

Check with an accountant, tax consultant, or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) about special benefits for people with limited finances after a fire loss.