

News Release: General Fire Safety

We have all heard the dramatic headlines on the late night news reporting a home fire, complete with footage of the burning home.

“Home fires take a devastating toll on human lives and property. News stories may portray home fires as unavoidable tragic events, but most are preventable,” according to (local fire department official). “Many home fires are the result of human behavior and simple changes in our behavior can prevent most fires.”

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimates that 403,000 home fires occurred in the United States in 2008, resulting in 2,755 deaths, 13,560 injuries and \$8.5 billion in property damage. NFPA reports that cooking is the leading cause of fires, injuries and unreported fires, followed by heating, electrical and intentionally set fires. Heating is the second leading cause of home fire deaths. Smoking materials such as cigarettes, cigars, and pipes are the leading cause of home fire deaths (approximately 25%) in the United States. Every year, almost 1,000 people die in home fires caused by cigarettes and other smoking materials; 25percent of those killed are not the smokers whose cigarette caused the fire.

“Smoking and drinking are a particularly dangerous combination,” (local fire department official) said. “Smoking materials are a ready-made fire threat and alcohol decreases your ability to detect and escape from a fire. The U.S. Fire Administration notes a significant link between alcohol and residential fire deaths, with up to 40 percent of those people killed in home fires impaired by alcohol.”

“In 2008, in _____ County, there were ____ home fires, ____ fire-related deaths and ____ fire-related injuries,” said (local fire department official). “Those at highest risks for fire deaths and injuries include some of our most vulnerable citizens: children under age five, adults age 65 and over, and people with physical disabilities.”

You can prevent home fires by making simple changes in your behavior. NFPA offers the following tips for fire prevention:

- Watch your cooking - Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you must leave, even for a short time, turn off the stove.
- Give space heaters space - Keep fixed and portable space heaters at least three feet from anything that can burn. Turn off heaters when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Smoke outside – Do not allow smoking in your home. Ask smokers to go outside to smoke. Provide sturdy, deep ashtrays for smokers and make sure cigarettes and ashes are completely out. Check for cigarette butts that may have fallen. Never smoke in a home where oxygen is used.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach - Keep matches and lighters up high, out of the reach of children, preferably in a cabinet with a child lock.
- Inspect electrical cords - Replace cords that are cracked, damaged, frayed, have broken plugs, or have loose connections.

- Be careful when using candles - Keep candles at least one foot from anything that can burn. Blow out candles when you leave the room or go to sleep.

Almost two thirds of home fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms. “While prevention of home fires is the goal, make sure your family is prepared should a fire occur. Make sure you have working smoke alarms throughout your home. These alarms provide you and your family with warning signals and time to escape your house in case of a fire,” (local fire department official) said.

Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms, and outside sleeping areas. Place carbon monoxide alarms in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home. Ideally, interconnect all smoke alarms so that when one sounds, they all sound. Test all alarms every month to make sure they are working properly and replace alarms that are more than 10 years old.

Smoke can kill very quickly. In a flaming fire, you and your family have only about three minutes after a smoke alarm sounds to escape. It’s important to develop and practice an escape plan with members of your household to give them the best chance to escape if a fire occurs.

If you are building or remodeling your home, install home fire sprinklers. Sprinklers can contain and put out a fire in less time than it would take the fire department to arrive.

For more information and fire prevention tips, call the (local fire department name) at (telephone number) or visit these websites: www.nfpa.org , www.safekids.org or www.firesafety.gov.