

Fire Prevention

Your home should be a safe haven. But do you regularly check for home fire hazards? If not, there is the potential for danger. Fire departments responded to nearly 400,000 home fires in 2006. That's why the theme of Fire Prevention Week 2008 is "It's Fire Prevention Week: Prevent Home Fires!" From October 5-11, 2008, fire safety advocates will spread the word to their communities that, with a little extra caution, preventing the leading causes of home fires - cooking, heating, electrical and smoking-materials - is within their power.

- **Cooking with Care**
 - Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period time, turn off the stove.
 - Keep anything that can catch fire – potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags – away from your stovetop.
 - Wear short, close fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire.
 - Always keep an oven mitt and lid handy. If a small fire starts in a pan on the stove, put on the oven mitt and smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan. Turn off the burner. Don't remove the lid until it is completely cool.
- **Everyday Electrical Safety**
 - Keep lamps, light fixtures, and light bulbs away from anything that can burn, such as lamp shades, bedding, curtains, and clothing.
 - Replace cracked and damaged electrical cords.
 - Use extension cords for temporary wiring only. Consider having additional circuits or receptacles added by a qualified electrician.
 - Homes with young children should have tamper-resistant electrical receptacles.
 - Call a qualified electrician or landlord if you have recurring problems with blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers, discolored or warm wall outlets, flickering lights or a burning or rubbery smell coming from an appliance.
- **Healthy Heating**
 - Install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms to avoid risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
 - Keep all things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
 - Turn portable space heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- **Strike Out Smoking-materials Fires**
 - If you smoke, choose fire-safe cigarettes if they are available in your area.
 - If you smoke, smoke outside.
 - Wherever you smoke, use deep, sturdy ashtrays.
 - Never smoke in a home where oxygen is used.
 - Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet, out of the reach of children.
 - Keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that can burn.
 - Use sturdy, safe candleholders.
 - Never leave a burning candle unattended. Blow out candles when you leave a room.
 - Avoid using candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas.
- **Safety 101**
 - Use flashlights for emergency lighting.
 - Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. For the best protection, interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
 - Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.
 - Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.
 - Make sure everyone can hear the sound of the smoke alarms.
- **Home Fire Escape Plan**
 - Have a home fire escape plan. Know at least two ways out of every room, if possible, and a meeting place outside.
- **Practice your escape plan twice a year.**
 - When the smoke alarm sounds, get out and stay out.
 - If you are building or remodeling your home, consider a residential fire sprinkler system.