

## Fire Prevention

October 2010

National Fire Prevention Week (October 3-9) has already come and gone, but Fire Departments nationwide are using the entire month of October to promote fire safety. Every year there are nearly 400,000 home fires in the United States, resulting in almost 3,000 deaths. Those 3,000 deaths account for 84% of all fire related fatalities. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has been at the forefront of fire safety, in the home and workplace, since 1896. The NFPA has sponsored the October Fire Prevention campaign since 1922 to educate and raise awareness about fire safety. The month of October was chosen to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire, which burned from October 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> in 1871. That fire destroyed a large section of Chicago and left nearly a third of the population homeless.

Fire safety for everyone should begin in the home. The most obvious place for such safety precautions is in the

kitchen. Keeping the kitchen clean and the area around the stove free of grease, oven mitts, towels, and aerosol cans is the easiest fix. Towels should not be hung on the oven door, which will definitely require you to find a new place for the seasonal decorative towels. Clothes for the chef, or chef in training, should be close fitting, with sleeves rolled up. When removing pots or pans from the stovetop, make sure you turn the burner off first, so you don't walk away and forget to do it later. If you have young children in the home, create a kid-free zone around the stove and oven.

Heating your home in the winter comes with its own set of hazards and potential fire starters. Space heaters, although comforting on cold nights, must be kept at least three feet away from combustible materials. This includes drapes, throw-rugs, furniture, or anything else that can burn. Fireplaces should have a protective glass or metal screen in front of them. Fireplaces and space heaters should be extinguished or turned off when not attended. Have your home heating system inspected annually to be sure it is working properly. Do not use the areas around your home heating system or water heater as storage space. The equipment needs to vent properly and is an obvious source of heat. Lastly, make sure you are cleaning the lint trap on the dryer after each use.

When storing paint or other flammable liquids in the house, they should be kept away from heat sources. Hopefully they are still in the original containers with the appropriate flammable warning labels on them, and have tight fitting lids. Remember, it is the vapors of a flammable liquid that burns, so even a slight leak in the container could still release enough vapor to be ignitable. Gasoline and extra propane cylinders for your gas grill should never be stored indoors. Any grill should be places a safe distance away from the house, garage, fences, deck railings, or anything else that could catch on fire.

Smoke detectors should be installed on every level of the home and in each bedroom. The detectors should be tested monthly, and batteries changed twice a year on daylight savings or when it chirps indicating a low battery.

A fire escape plan should be developed for your household. Most home fires start between 12:00 and 6:00 am, when you are sleeping. This gives you just a short amount of time to wake up, come to your senses, and quickly get out of the house. Prepare the fire escape routes with your family and decide on a meeting place. You should review the plan with your family at least twice a year and make sure everyone has at least two routes of exit from the home.

National Fire Prevention is an occasion rooted in the most notorious fire in American history. It reminds everyone to be aware of fire hazards and what are the best precautions to take to prevent unnecessary property damage, injury, and death.



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Newsletter Spotlight

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