

FIRE SAFETY TIPS FOR FAMILIES

Q: Why is fire safety so important?

A: According to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) statistics, in 2002 there were 389,000 reported home fires in the United States, which resulted in 2,67 deaths, 13,650 injuries, and \$5.9 billion in property damage. Nationwide, there is approximately one fire-related death every three hours!



To reduce the number of fires, as well as fire-related deaths and injuries, the National Fire Protection Association recommends the the following tips for individuals and families.



✓ **PREVENT FIRES FROM STARTING:**

- ◆ Make sure there is an adult supervising cooking in the kitchen. Make the area around the stove child and pet free when an adult is cooking.
 - ◆ Keep flammable objects, such as paper, towels, curtains, potholders, away from the stove.
 - ◆ Turn off portable space heaters when leaving the room or going to sleep. Keep heaters away from objects that can burn, such as walls, bedding, or clothes.
 - ◆ Blow out candles when leaving the room. Pets and young children can easily knock candles over. Make sure candleholders are deep enough to prevent them from tipping.
 - ◆ Smokers should put water on butts or ashes before throwing them out, and use heavy, non-tip ashtrays.
 - ◆ Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.
 - ◆ Make sure the home's electrical cords are in good condition, with no cracks or frayed areas.
 - ◆ Keep flammable liquids, such as gasoline, propane, or kerosene in a safe container outside the home in a locked garage or shed.
- ✓ Make sure there are working smoke detectors on every level of the home, including the basement. Place detectors outside of each sleeping area and since smoke rises, mount them high on walls or ceilings. For those who sleep with their door closed, it may be wise to have interconnected alarms (when one sounds, they all sound) installed by a qualified electrician.

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FIRE SAFETY TIPS FOR FAMILIES (CONTINUED)

- ✓ Once a month, check the batteries in the alarms to make sure they work. Replace batteries once a year. (The start of daylight savings is a good time to change the batteries.) If the alarm chirps, the battery is low. Never borrow a battery from a smoke alarm!
- ✓ Make sure that the smoke detectors in the home are not more than ten years old. If no one can remember how old the alarms are, it is time to replace them.
- ✓ Do not paint or decorate alarms. Doing so could keep them from working properly.
- ✓ Make sure everyone in the home knows the sound of the smoke alarm and knows what to do if it goes off. Adults should sound the alarm one night as a test to make sure everyone wakes up.
- ✓ Create a "fire escape plan" on paper. Draw a floor map of your home (including all doors and windows), mark two ways out of each room, where the smoke detectors are located, and the family meeting spot--the safe, outdoor location where everyone would meet in the event of a fire.
- ✓ Test the fire escape plan twice a year. Since smoke rises, the air closer to the floor is safer to breathe. Practice crawling on floor under the "smoke."
- ✓ Make sure that doors, stairways, and other exits are not blocked by furniture or clutter. In a fire, every second counts. If there is someone in the home who needs special help getting around, (such as an elderly person or a baby) make sure someone can assist them in a fire.
- ✓ If children ask to attend a sleepover at their friend's home, read the "Sleepover Checklist" (which follows) or download it from www.nfpa.org/FPW/Planning/Safety_Tips/Escape/Sleepover/Sleep2/sleep2.asp before making a decision. This checklist was written to help parents and think about the possible hazards that may exist at a friend's home.
- ✓ In the event of a fire, call for help once safely outside the home.

Source: *National Fire Protection Association Web site at www.nfpa.org.*



A Sleepover checklist for parents and caregivers

The National Fire Protection Association created the following SLEEPOVER CHECKLIST for parents and caregivers to help them make decisions about slumber parties and sleepovers.

BEFORE YOU SAY "YES" TO A SLEEPOVER OR SLUMBER PARTY:

- ☐ How well do you know the home?
- ☐ Is the home clean? Does it appear to be structurally sound?
- ☐ Is the home in a safe area?
- ☐ If the home has security bars on doors and windows, do you know for certain that the bars have quick release devices inside, so your child could get out in an emergency?
- ☐ Is your child comfortable in the home and with all the occupants?
- ☐ Are you comfortable leaving your child in the home overnight?

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE OTHER CHILD'S PARENTS?

- ☐ Are they mature, responsible and conscientious?
- ☐ Will they supervise the children throughout the stay?
- ☐ Will they remain sober and attentive?
- ☐ Are they cautious with smoking materials, matches/lighters, and candles?

ASK THE PARENTS:

- ☐ Are there working smoke alarms on every level throughout their home?
- ☐ Do they have a well-rehearsed fire escape plan that includes two ways out and a meeting spot outside?
- ☐ Where will your child be sleeping? Is there a smoke alarm in or near the room? Are there two escape routes from the room?
- ☐ Will the parents walk through their escape plan with your child?
- ☐ Do the parents prohibit bedroom candle use by the children?

TELL THE PARENTS:

- ☐ about your home fire escape plan and the fire protection equipment you have in your home.
- ☐ that you will walk their child through your plan when invited to stay overnight in your home.

DOES YOUR CHILD...

- ☐ recognize and awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm? Important: If not, tell the sleep-over parents that your child does not waken to the smoke alarm and that someone will have to wake them in an emergency.
- ☐ know what to do when the smoke alarm sounds?
- ☐ know that he or she cannot hide from fire and that the top priority is to get out and stay out until firefighters say it is safe to go back inside?
- ☐ know the fire department emergency number?
- ☐ feel empowered to ask about the friends' escape plan?
- ☐ feel empowered to tell you if there is a dangerous situation at the friends' home?