

Fire Prevention in the Home

Residential properties account for the largest number of fires in Canada. These fires result in millions of dollars in damages and claim hundreds of lives each year.

Open flames, cooking appliances and heating equipment are the primary sources of ignition. Here are some tips to help keep your home safe.

Open flames including smoking

Careless smoking is a major cause of fires.

- Make sure cigarette butts are fully extinguished and disposed of properly, ensuring that no combustibles are ignited.
- Store matches and lighters out of children's access.
- Use candles sparingly and never leave them unattended.
- Never smoke in bed.

Electrical

Electrical systems are complex and dangerous if not installed correctly.

- Always use a licensed electrician.
- Check your electrical system for safety.
- Knob and tube, or aluminum wiring are no longer used today and can be a source of fire. Consider upgrading your electrical system to current standards.
- If your home was built between 1965 and 1975 it may have aluminum wiring.
- If a circuit breaker trips or a fuse blows, find out why. If the surge in current is caused by a short circuit, it needs to be corrected.
- Extension cords are intended for temporary use, do not use them for permanent purposes.

Heating equipment

There are many ways that heating equipment cause fires, including carelessness, lack of maintenance and improper installations. It is essential that a qualified technician install, maintain and inspect your equipment to help avoid fires.

Wood stoves and fireplaces

- Burn dry wood only and never burn pressure treated wood.
- Inspect and clean chimney flues regularly.
- Ensure fireplace screens are in place to control sparks.
- Never store combustibles near a wood stove.
- Obey all clearance requirements, including storage of wood next to the stove.

Fuel oil storage tanks

- Follow all standards and regulations for the installation of these tanks.
- Inspect tanks on a regular basis and replace accordingly.
- Use a qualified bulk fuel dealer for delivery of heating oil.

Portable heaters

- Use these sparingly and ensure all combustibles are kept well away from the heater.

Cooking appliances

- Only use approved cooking appliances that are thermostatically controlled.
- Never leave cooking unattended.

Cooking appliances con'd

- Clean stove hood filters, vents and grease traps frequently.
- Never throw water on a grease fire, use baking soda, salt or a class B rated fire extinguisher.

Flammable liquids

- Use proper storage containers that are clearly and correctly identified.
- Gasoline should never be stored in your home.
- Limit the quantities of flammable liquids to as little as possible, preferably less than one gallon.
- Do not store paints or solvents near any source of heat.

Holiday decorations

- Never leave Christmas lights on unattended.
- Keep real Christmas trees adequately watered, a dry tree burns very quickly once ignited.
- Burn candles with care; never leave them unattended.

BBQ safety

- Never use a BBQ indoors or in a garage.
- When operating a BBQ, keep it well away from walls and overhangs.
- Do not leave a BBQ unattended.

Children

- Never leave young children alone at home.
- Keep all sources of ignition away from children.
- Childproof your electrical outlets to prevent items from being inserted into the outlets.
- Ensure babysitters know the escape routes and have basic fire prevention knowledge.

Actions You Can Take:

Smoke detectors

Smoke detectors should be tested regularly. If battery operated, the battery should be replaced semi-annually. A helpful reminder to replace them is to do so when clocks are changed from/to Daylight Saving Time.

Fire extinguishers

Every house should have a properly functioning fire extinguisher. A multi-purpose (ABC rated) listed fire extinguisher should be readily accessible at all times.

To help operate a fire extinguisher properly, remember the acronym PASS:

P - Pull the pin

A - Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire

S - Squeeze the trigger

S - Sweep the extinguisher from side to side.

Plan your exit

Ensure all residents of the home know the fire escape route. Create an escape plan and practice it. Your plan should consider escaping from each room in the house. Leave a burning building immediately and call the fire department from a safer location. Fight a fire with a fire extinguisher only if it is small and contained

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