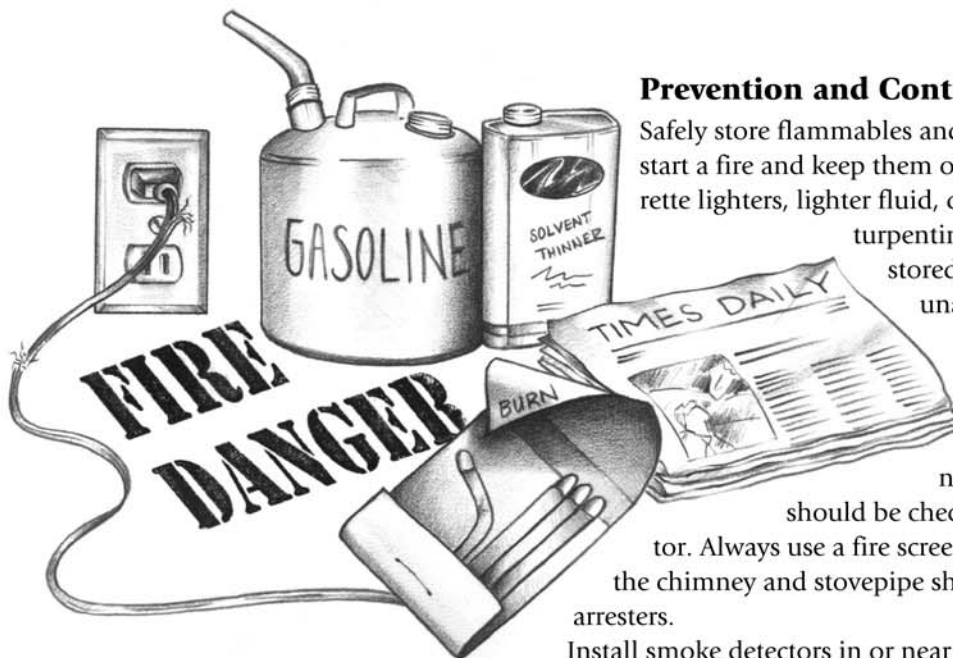


Is Your Home Fire Safe?

Follow this handy guide to home fire safety, prevention and control



Prevention and Control

Safely store flammables and materials that are or could be used to start a fire and keep them out of reach. These include matches, cigarette lighters, lighter fluid, cleaning fluid, paint, paint thinner and turpentine. Gasoline and solvents should be stored in approved safety cans, preferably in an unattached shed or garage. Be particularly careful not to put such products near a source of flame or a spark, such as a water heater or a furnace. Have your furnace and chimney checked and, if needed, cleaned annually. The furnace should be checked only by a reputable heating contractor. Always use a fire screen when there's a fire in the fireplace, and the chimney and stovepipe should have half-inch mesh-screen spark arresters.

Install smoke detectors in or near bedrooms or in hallways and change the batteries every six months—or sooner if needed. Check them monthly. (A smoke detector with working batteries doubles your chances of surviving a fire.) Keep a multipurpose fire extinguisher handy, particularly for kitchen fires and near a working fireplace, and learn how to use it. Make sure any security bars or grilles on windows or doors can be opened easily from the inside, especially those over bedroom windows. If you don't have a fire escape, keep portable escape ladders on the upper floors of your home.

Keep kitchen curtains and dish towels away from the range burners. Likewise, don't drape bath towels too close to a wall heater. Keep portable heaters at least 3 feet from anything flammable, and don't drape anything over them. Keep ovens, range hoods, ventilation ducts and microwave ovens free of grease.

Electrical Precautions

Don't overload electrical outlets or power strips past the power capacity of each circuit. Keep power cords in good condition and try to avoid extension cords. Replace frayed or cracked cords and never run cords under rugs. Don't place a penny behind a burned-out fuse in an attempt to extend its life, and don't exceed the wattage capacity of lamps and light fixtures. When in doubt, use a 60-watt bulb.

Cleaning Improves Your Safety

Clean up and haul away rubbish, including newspapers, pieces of wood, rags and old tires. Merely piling such debris outside doesn't get rid of the problem. In fact, remove all flammable rubbish, debris and vegetation from at least 30 feet around your house and keep a 100-foot hose with a power nozzle handy. Keep the roof and roof gutters clean of leaves and clear of branches. Inspect the mesh over your chimney and clear any branches at least 10 feet from the chimney. Keep your property well lit to discourage arsonists.

PASS the Fire Extinguisher

An easy way to remember how to use a fire extinguisher is to think of the acronym PASS:

- P**—Pull the safety pin.
- A**—Aim at the base of the flame.
- S**—Squeeze the handle.
- S**—Sweep back and forth and up and down.

Check the pressure gauge on your fire extinguisher once a month to make sure it's fully charged. A nonrechargeable fire extinguisher should last about 12 years. Rechargeable ones usually last about six years between rechargings. A typical home fire extinguisher discharges in less than 10 seconds. An extinguisher is never a substitute for calling the fire department, even if you think the fire is out.



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