

Fire Safety for the Home

The U.S. Fire Administration reports that there were more than 360,000 household fires in 2010, which caused more than 2,500 deaths and 13,000 injuries. Most of these fires were started by mishaps involving cooking, heating and smoking. That means that the majority of these accidents were preventable. These simple tips, which are endorsed by the National Fire Protection Association, will help keep your family safe:

1. Plan and practice your escape from fire.

Map out an escape route and a meeting place outdoors, and involve even the youngest family members.

2. Plan your escape around your abilities.

Keeping a phone by your bedside will allow you to call 911 quickly, especially if the exits of your home are blocked by smoke or flames. Keep a pair of shoes near your bed, too.

3. Smoke alarms save lives.

If you don't already have permanently installed smoke alarms hard-wired into your electrical system and located outside each bedroom and on each floor, purchase units and place them in those locations.

4. Give space heaters space.

Give space heaters at least 3 feet of clearance. Be sure to turn off and unplug them when you leave or go to bed, since electrical appliances draw current even when they're turned off.

5. If you smoke, smoke outside.

Not only will this keep your family members healthier and your home smelling fresher, it will minimize the chance that an errant ember from your cigarette will drop and smolder unnoticed until it causes damage.

6. Be kitchen-wise.

Monitor what you have on the stove and keep track of what's baking in the oven. Wear clothing that will not easily catch on the handles of pots and pans or graze open flames and heating elements. You should also know how to put out a grease fire: water will make it spread, but salt or baking soda will extinguish it quickly, as will covering the pot or pan with a lid and turning off the stove.

7. Stop, drop and roll.

Fight the urge to panic and run if your clothes catch fire because this will only accelerate its spread. During a fire, stay close to the floor where the air will be more breathable. Use extreme caution before opening a closed door; a hot doorknob indicates that there's fire on the other side, and opening a door quickly can feed the fire a burst of oxygen that may lead to an explosion.

8. Know your local emergency number.

People of all ages need to know their emergency number. Post it near the phone and put it on speed-dial.



For more helpful tips, go to www.NACHI.org/consumer-articles