How to prevent a house fire: 7 tips to spark safety.



Did you know a house fire happens every 87 seconds? And, in just two minutes a fire can become life-threatening. To help keep your loved ones safe, follow these seven steps to prevent a home fire.

1. **Test your smoke alarms.** Once a month, check your alarms by pushing the test button. Don't forget: You also should replace all smoke alarms that are 10 years old (or when they don't sound if tested). To take it one step further, confirm you have the right amount of smoke alarms, as advised by the U.S. Fire Administration. Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home (including the basement). For the best protection, make sure they're all interconnected.

2. **Identify fire hazards in your home.** There's no avoiding the oven. But there are other things you may want to remove, relocate or re-evaluate. For example, did you know glass décor displayed near a window can actually soak up the sun and magnify its heat onto a nearby carpet or curtain? Discover 14 household items that could be cause for concern, and address them accordingly.

3. **Understand your home electrical system.** Electricity makes our lives easier, but only if it's used correctly. If you're buying or remodeling your home, it's important to have the electrical work inspected by a professional. After that, look out for exposed wires and frayed cords. Also, if you ever have frequent problems with your circuit breakers, a tingling feeling when you touch an appliance, discolored or warm wall outlets, flickering or dimming lights, or sparks from an outlet, call an electrician immediately.

4. **Inspect your heat sources.** Every year have a professional service your furnace. He or she will be able to identify if it isn't working properly, which could prevent a fire. Using a space heater for even more warmth? Keep it away from items that could catch fire easily, like curtains and furniture. If you

have a wood-burning fireplace, have your chimney inspected annually by a certified chimney sweep.

5. **Prevent kitchen catastrophes.** Find out what you can do to prevent fires in the first place (like cleaning crumbs out of the toaster and unplugging appliances when they aren't in use). And, what to do if there actually is a kitchen fire. Check out: How to avoid 3 common kitchen disasters.

6. **Safely store combustible materials.** Flammable products should always be kept away from heat. Designate a cool, dark cupboard or storage space for hairspray, and cleaning and garden supplies. Additionally, gasoline, kerosene and propane should be kept outside in the original containers.

7. **Practice candle safety.** The National Fire Protection Association reports there is an average of 21 home fires caused by candles every day. Another study found that 85% of candle fires are preventable. To make sure you know how to "candle" with care, learn more about candle safety.

Despite taking precautions to prevent a house fire, sometimes accidents still happen. To make sure you're prepared, learn the ins and outs of fire extinguishers: which one(s) you should have, where you should keep them, how to use them and how often to replace them.

Bonus reads: 7 tips for a safe fire pit and 15 grill safety tips.

Happen to be a small business owner? Prepare your workplace with this checklist – designed to help you promote fire prevention and protection.