

Home Fire Safety



In 2006, there were 66 civilian fire deaths and 307 reported injuries. Many of these fires occurred in the home. Protect your family and property from fire this year with the following life-saving tips:

Smoke Alarms Save Lives

- Working smoke alarms save lives and can double your chances of surviving a fire.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home.
- Test your smoke alarm monthly.
- Clean your smoke alarm often. Keep it free of dust and replace the battery at least twice a year. Remember, improperly working smoke, especially alarms with missing batteries, can not warn you of danger!

Heating

No matter what heating device you use in your home, there are safety measures you can take to prevent fires.

Keep Fireplaces and Wood Stoves Clean

- Have your chimney or wood stove inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces. Leave glass doors open while burning a fire.
- Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue temperatures.
- Keep air inlets on wood stoves open, and never restrict air supply to fireplaces. Otherwise you may cause creosote buildup that could lead to a chimney fire.
- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around wood stoves.
- For wood stove fuel and fireplaces use only seasoned wood, not green wood, artificial logs, or trash.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Soak hot ashes in water and place them in a metal container outside your home.

Kerosene Heaters

- Kerosene heaters may not be permitted in certain areas. If you use a kerosene heater, use only the recommended fuel. Always refuel outdoors safety away from your home.
- Allow the heater to cool before refueling and only refuel outdoors.

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Special Populations

Because fire safety information is critical to planning and overall preparedness, the Virginia Department of Fire Programs recommend the following safety tips for special populations:

- Include everyone in your home and make a home escape plan, making provisions for anyone who has a disability. Practice your plan at least twice a year.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and outside of each sleeping area.
- When developing your evacuation plan, remember to inform others if you have special needs. For example, if you live in an apartment building you may want to share your plan with the appropriate building and management personnel or your local fire department.
- If necessary, have a ramp available for emergency exits.
- Unless instructed by the fire department, never use an elevator during a fire.
- Be sure your street address is clearly marked and visible from the street.
- Know which local emergency services are available and have those numbers posted or memorized.
- People with hearing impairments cannot hear alarms and voice announcements that warn of danger and the need to evacuate.

Plan Your Escape

- Practice finding your way out of the house with your eyes closed, crawling or staying low and feeling your way out of the house.
- Never open doors that are hot to the touch.
- Teach your family to stop, drop to the ground and roll if their clothes catch fire.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows at least two ways to escape from each room in the house.
- Make sure everyone in the family understands and practices how to properly operate and open locked or barred doors and windows.
- Designate a meeting place outside and take attendance. Get out and stay out.
- Remember to escape first, then notify the fire department.
- Finally, practice makes perfect! Practice your home fire escape plan every month.

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