

FIRE SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE



If you or someone in your area works with flammable or combustible substances, there are certain precautions you should take. Check with your company's safety manager to follow specific guidelines. In the meantime, here are some basic safety rules when working with or near these types of materials.

- Keep flammable and combustible substances in appropriate containers, labeled properly.
- Arrange your work area so that spills are prevented from spreading.
- Store flammable and combustible materials away from ignition sources such as hot surfaces, sparks from electrical or welding equipment, and open flames.
- Be sure there's adequate ventilation. Store all flammable and combustible substances separately from general storage items.
- Never smoke or light a match near a flammable or combustible substance.

If you hear the fire alarm ... Don't assume it's a drill or a false alarm — stop what you are doing and follow the fire safety plan for your specific workplace.

WATCH for Flammable Situations

- **Heat-producing machines** that might come in contact with paper, boxes, oily rags or other combustibles.
- **Appliances** such as coffee pots, hotplates, space heaters, etc., that could be inadvertently left on at the end of the day.
- **Electrical cords** that have cracks, worn insulation or broken connections.
- **Extension cords** left in pathways where they could become worn or broken.
- **Electrical equipment** that seems to be malfunctioning or producing a burning odor.

FIRE SAFETY QUIZ



1. When a fire alarm sounds at work, first check with your colleagues to see if it's a drill so you don't waste valuable time leaving the area. T F
2. The typical home fire is started by cigarettes. . . T F
3. Both at home and at work, once outside, everyone should meet at a designated area. . . T F
4. If your clothing catches fire, you should try to extinguish it with water. T F
5. Smoke kills more people than fire. T F

ANSWERS

1. **False.** Don't rely on co-workers for direction — follow the fire safety procedure for your specific workplace.
2. **False.** The leading cause of home fires is cooking and heating equipment; portable heaters, wood stoves and fireplaces. Keep heaters at least 3 feet from curtains, bedding and anything flammable; never leave them unattended.
3. **True.** A fire escape route, a designated meeting area and regular drills should be part of your home and work fire safety plan.
4. **False.** If your clothing is on fire, don't run — immediately stop, drop and roll — cover your face with your hands and roll over and over to snuff out the flames.
5. **True.** Smoke inhalation, not flames, kills more people in fires. Avoid escaping through heavy smoke if possible, or drop to the ground where the air is clearer and crawl out under the smoke.

FIRE SAFETY

AT HOME AND AT WORK



DON'T TAKE FIRE SAFETY FOR GRANTED



In a structural fire, the biggest threat to human life isn't usually the flames themselves but the lethal smoke that comes with them. A person can be overcome by life-threatening smoke inhalation within a few minutes.

Most fires at home are preventable by maintaining safe electrical systems and chimneys, and thinking safety first while cooking, working with flammable materials and using space heaters, for example. However, if fire does break out, you're more likely to get out alive when you have properly installed working smoke detectors throughout your home.

It's best to have smoke detectors near all sleeping areas and on every floor. Use the test button to test your smoke detectors monthly. A chirping sounds means the batteries are losing power. Always replace batteries with new ones. Watch for dust accumulation, and never paint a smoke detector.

Get to Know Your Fire Extinguisher

Small home fires are most common in the kitchen, garage and workshop. Find space in these areas to keep a UL-listed fire extinguisher, which can be used to fight small, confined fires. The best fire extinguisher for home use is a Type ABC. But remember, most extinguishers spray for about 10-18 seconds, so they are useful only in putting out very small fires.

To use a fire extinguisher (at home or at work), think P-A-S-S:

PULL the pin.

AIM at the base of the fire.

SQUEEZE the handle.

SWEEP from side to side at the base of the fire until it is out.

Most home fire extinguishers are not rechargeable, and so they must be replaced if they have been discharged. **Most important:** In case the fire cannot be controlled, make sure your back is facing a clear and unobstructed exit. Be ready to dial 911.

Put a Lid on Kitchen Flames

Most kitchen fires start at the range, with cooking left unattended. First practice prevention, but know what to do if fire flares up. **Prevention tips:**



- Keep a close eye on what's cooking.
- While cooking, don't wear loose or dangling clothing, which could catch on fire.
- Clean cooking surfaces to keep grease and food particles from building up.
- Keep combustible materials such as paper towels, potholders and dish towels away from the stove.
- Watch children carefully in the kitchen.

How to Put Out a Cooking Fire

- For grease or oil fires in a pan or pot, carefully slide the lid on to smother the flames. Then turn off the heat and let things cool down. Don't attempt to carry what's burning outside.
- Throw baking soda on other small food fires. Do not use water or flour.
- If fire occurs inside the oven, keep the oven door closed. Turn off the heat. The lack of air will smother the flames.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and know how to use it.

GET SMART ABOUT YOUR FIREPLACE

1. Have your chimney professionally inspected and cleaned each year to remove excess creosote, a highly flammable tar substance that builds up on chimney walls.
2. Avoid burning paper or anything that can create toxic fumes.
3. Keep fire screens or doors closed for protection against sparks and loose logs.
4. Never leave a fire unattended, especially if small children or pets are nearby.
5. Don't close the vent until the fire is out and the ashes are cool.



Don't Let Your Dryer Catch on Fire

Lint buildup in your dryer's exhaust system is a primary cause of dryer fires because lint is highly combustible. It's important to clean out your dryer's lint filter with every load or every other load.

Also check to see how your dryer vents. For example, an exhaust pipe with elbow turns reduces airflow, which generates higher temperatures and may lead to a dryer malfunction that results in a fire.

Get your dryer's venting system inspected at least every couple of years, and have it checked anytime you sense it's not operating correctly.

More dryer tips: Don't leave home or go to sleep while the dryer is running. Never put synthetic fabric, plastics or cloths that have been used for flammable liquids in the dryer.



Signs of Electrical Trouble

Homes 40 years old and older usually are most vulnerable to electrical fires as wiring systems weren't made to last forever. Additions to the electrical system, such as high-wattage appliances, lights and receptacle outlets, can push an old electrical system beyond its limit if not installed according to current codes. However, no home — new or old — is immune to electrical problems.

Cause for concern: Dim or flickering lights, shrinking TV picture, unusual sounds from the electrical system, an odor of hot insulation and electrical shocks (even as much as a mild tingle) are signs of trouble. Call a qualified electrician for advice.