

# Fire Safety

## Put a Lid on Office Flames

If you or someone in your area works with flammable substances, there are certain precautions you should take. Workplaces are required to follow National Fire Protection Association guidelines and Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards on flammable substances. Check with your company's safety manager to follow specific guidelines. In the meantime, here are some basic safety rules everyone should know when working with or near flammable materials.

- Keep flammable substances in appropriate containers and label them "flammable." Arrange your work area so that spills would be prevented from spreading.
- Store flammable 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 substances separately from general storage items.
- Never smoke or light a match near any flammable substance.

(Source: National Safety Council, 2008)

## Choosing Fire Extinguishers

Different fire extinguishers do different jobs. Here's how to tell the difference.

**Class A.** Effective on materials that burn easily, such as wood, trash, cloth, upholstery, plastic or rubber.

**Class B.** Effective against fast-burning liquids, such as gasoline, fuel oil, paints and solvents, as well as grease and tar.

**Class C.** For use on electrical equipment, fuse boxes, wiring and appliances.

**Class D.** For use on metals.

Fire extinguishers are labeled A, B or C, or combinations of these. An extinguisher labeled ABC, for example, is all-purpose and suitable for home use. Extinguishers also feature a numerical rating indicating how big a fire they can handle. The higher the number, the heavier the extinguisher and the bigger the fire it can handle.

(Source: National Safety Council, The New Wellness Encyclopedia)

## BURNS:

### When to Get Help

For burns, medical attention should be sought immediately if any of the following conditions exist:

- Burn is moderate or severe
- Victim is under 5 or over 60 years of age
- Difficulty breathing
- Severe injuries exist
- Electric injury exists
- Face, hands, feet or genitals are burned
- Suspected child abuse
- Body surface area of second-degree burn is greater than 20 percent of the body surface
- All burns are third-degree (burn reaches underlying fat and muscles; skin looks charred, leathery or pearly gray)

(Source: National Safety Council, First Aid Handbook)

## WHERE THERE'S SMOKE ...

Many fire-related injuries and deaths aren't caused by flames. Smoke from a fire can cause serious damage to the respiratory system and may even cause a person to suffocate. **Remember:** Smoke rises. If you're in a fire, stay close to the floor when exiting to safety.



## BURNS: WHEN YOU DON'T NEED MEDICAL CARE

Burns sometimes require emergency medical treatment. For continued self-care of first-degree burns — and small second-degree burns, which reach the inner skin layer — continue to reduce pain and swelling with an anti-inflammatory drug, such as aspirin or ibuprofen. Apply aloe vera gel (100 percent) to soothe the skin and keep the skin moist. A dressing is not usually needed.

(Source: National Safety Council, First Aid Handbook)

## What Every Firefighter Wants You to Know

Each year, fire kills more Americans than all natural disasters combined. In fact, the United States has one of the highest fire death rates in the industrialized world.

### At work:

- Follow safety procedures, especially if you work with chemicals or other flammable materials.
- Familiarize yourself with fire exits.
- **Remember:** Elevators won't be usable in a fire.
- Dispose of flammable materials properly. Don't put cigarette butts, matches or ashes in the wastebasket.



Most fire injuries and deaths occur at home — at least 80 percent. The majority of home fires start in the kitchen with the bedroom coming in a close second. Home or work, you can keep you and your loved ones safe by practicing fire safety prevention.

### At home:

- Keep an eye on burning cigarettes, lit candles and cooking food. It only takes a second for fire to start.
- Install smoke detectors on every floor of your home. The early warning can give you a chance to get out of a burning building in time.
- Put fire extinguishers in different areas of your home, such as in the kitchen and near the furnace. Make sure everyone in the house knows where they are and how to use them.
- Be prepared in the event of a fire. Find two escape routes from every room ... choose a safe meeting place outside the house, and time how long it takes family members to get there ... practice "stop, drop and roll" — dropping to the ground and rolling to smother flames on clothing.

### If you travel for work ...

... remember that fire travels, too. If a fire breaks out while you're staying at a hotel, use the stairs — not the elevator — to exit safely. Before opening the door to the stairway, touch the knob. If it's hot, there's fire on the other side. If you can't leave safely, return to your hotel room and hang a white shirt or towel out of the window to signal firefighters.

## How to Treat a Burn

Treating mild, first-degree burns involves certain DOs and DON'Ts:

**DO** immerse the burned area in cold water or under cold running water for about 15 minutes. The water soothes as it cleanses.

**DON'T** use a dressing. Most first-degree burns don't need it.

**DO** relieve pain and inflammation with aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen or ketoprofen. **Note:** Acetaminophen, which is easier on the stomach, relieves pain but not inflammation.

**DON'T** use a burn ointment. Usually oil-based and antiseptic, an ointment won't relieve pain but will instead trap heat, slow healing and may lead to infection.

**DO** apply a cold compress or ice wrapped in a towel.

**DON'T** apply ice directly to the burn to avoid frostbite.

**DO** avoid home remedies, such as applying butter or mayonnaise. They are oil-based and as with ointments, can cause problems.