

# AN OUNCE OF FIRE PREVENTION

FACILITATOR GUIDE



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## ACTIVITIES: GETTING FIRED UP FOR PREVENTION

**Purpose:** The purpose of these activities is to encourage participants to take measures to prevent fires in their homes.

### Objectives:

- Identify the elements necessary for a fire.
- Demonstrate how to use a fire extinguisher.

**Preparation and Needed Materials:** Prior to conducting these activities, you may want to:

- Contact the fire department about participating in this session.
- Collect materials and items to demonstrate effective fire prevention measures.

**Presentation Tips:** Refer the participants to the Fire Prevention Guidelines handout.

- Welcome the participants. Explain that more than 3,500 Americans die each year in fires and approximately 18,000 are injured. An overwhelming number of fires occur in the home. This presentation reviews time-tested ways to prevent and survive a fire.
- Ask participants to review the items on the handout. After giving them time to review the handout, point out the following guidelines:
  - **Keep Working Smoke Detectors:** The single most important thing is to have a working smoke detector. Working smoke alarms can double your chances of survival. Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home. Test it monthly, keep it free of dust, and replace the battery at least once a year. Smoke alarms themselves should be replaced after 10 years of service, or as recommended by the manufacturer. Note: Consider installing a carbon monoxide detector if your dwelling has:
    - Liquid-fueled space heaters (kerosene or propane).
    - An attached garage.
    - Gas appliances (furnace, stove, fireplace, clothes dryer, or hot water heater).
    - Oil heat.
    - A wood stove.

If you live in an all-electric single family residence without any combustion-type appliances or an attached garage, you may not need a residential carbon monoxide detector.

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### Presentation Tips: (Continued)

- **Reduce Your Fire Risk:** Take steps to reduce flammable materials in your home. Reduce flammable chemicals and materials in your home and store them away from an ignition source.
  - Reduce the amount of hazardous materials in the home. Store flammable materials, liquids and solvents in metal containers outside the home, at least 30 feet away from structures and wooden fences.
  - Prevent electrical fires. Never overload circuits or extension cords. Do not place cords and wires under rugs, over nails, or in high-traffic areas. Immediately shut off and unplug appliances that sputter, spark, or emit an unusual smell. Have them professionally repaired or replaced.
  - Avoid cooking fires. Most home fires occur in the kitchen, and cooking fires are the leading cause of injuries from fire. Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- **STOP, DROP, and ROLL:** Clothes can catch on fire if they get close to heat sources such as open fires or stoves, or when playing with matches or lighters. If clothing catches on fire, a natural reaction may be to run. The moment clothes start to burn, stop where you are, drop to the ground, cover your face with your hands and roll repeatedly to smother the flames. Note: You may want to demonstrate “STOP, DROP, and ROLL.”
- **Educate Children:** Children under 5 are naturally curious about fire. Many play with matches and lighters. Fifty-two percent of all children who die in fires are under age 5. Take the mystery out of fire play by teaching your children that fire is a tool, not a toy.
- **Practice an Escape Plan:** Practice an escape plan from every room in the house. Caution everyone to stay low to the floor when escaping from fire (“GET LOW and GO”) and never to open doors that are hot. Select a location where everyone can meet after escaping the house. Get out then call for help.

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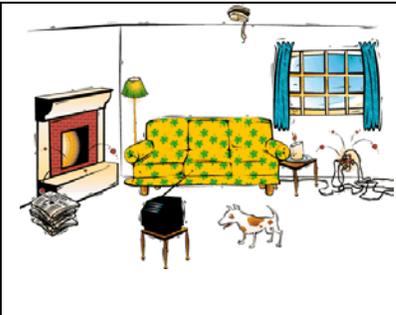
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## ACTIVITIES: GETTING FIRED UP FOR PREVENTION

**Demonstrate the Activities:** Distribute the Getting Fired Up for Prevention handout. Explain that the participants can complete these two activities with members of their households. Note that you will demonstrate the activities.

### Activity #1: Reduce Fire Risks

1. Refer the participants to the drawings of the rooms. Ask the participants to identify the hazards in each room. If not mentioned, add the hazards listed below:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overloaded electrical outlet</li><li>• Candle too close to upholstered materials and left unattended</li><li>• Television left on and unattended</li><li>• Mesh screen missing from in front of the fireplace</li><li>• Newspapers left too close to the fireplace where a spark could ignite them</li><li>• Smoke alarm battery missing</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Towel too close to the stove top</li><li>• Child cooking alone</li><li>• Pot handle turned in the wrong direction – it should be turned to the center of the stove to prevent burns</li><li>• Smoke alarm battery missing in hallway</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clothing draped over lamp where it could start to burn</li><li>• An object (duck) placed on a space heater where it could start to burn</li><li>• Space heater left on when no one is in the room</li><li>• Clothing left too close to the space heater where it could catch fire</li><li>• Smoke alarm battery missing</li></ul>

2. Next, divide the participants into teams and have them complete a room-by-room search for possible fire hazards. At the end of the search, have the teams complete the checklists and report their findings. You may want to “plant” mockup of hazards in the rooms that are not dangerous.



## ACTIVITIES: GETTING FIRED UP FOR PREVENTION

### **Demonstrate the Activities (Continued)**

#### **Activity #2: Have a Plan**

1. Refer the participants to the handout on developing a fire escape plan. Ask the participants to work in their teams to develop an escape plan for the room or floor where you are meeting.
2. After the plans are developed, ask each team to present the plan.
3. Next, ask the participants to identify how they develop and practice fire escape plans for their homes.

# AN OUNCE OF FIRE PREVENTION

## FIRE PREVENTION GUIDELINES: HANDOUT



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More than 3,500 Americans die each year in fires and approximately 18,300 are injured. An overwhelming number of fires occur in the home. Review the time-tested ways to prevent and survive a fire.

### Install Smoke Alarms

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement. Many fatal fires begin late at night or early in the morning, so the U.S. Fire Administration recommends installing smoke alarms both inside and outside of sleeping areas. Some fire departments will install battery-operated smoke alarms in your home at no cost. Contact your local fire department's non-emergency phone number for more information.
- Test each alarm monthly and ask those living in the home if they heard it (or saw it, if you have a flashing-light type for the hearing impaired).
- Replace the batteries at least once per year, or with long-lasting batteries. If replacing annually, pick a holiday to partner this activity with, so that it becomes a regular function of that holiday. Replace the entire smoke alarm unit after 10 years of service, or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Never disable a smoke alarm while cooking. A smoke alarm is just doing its job when it sounds while you are cooking or taking a shower with lots of steam.

### Develop and Practice a Fire Escape Plan

- Ensure that all household members know two ways to escape from every room of your home.
- Mark the entrance to your property with signs that are clearly visible.
- Make sure everyone knows where to meet outside in case of fire.
- Practice escaping from your home at least twice a year and at different times of the day. Practice waking up to smoke alarms, low crawling, and meeting outside. Make sure everyone knows how to call 911.
- Teach household members to **STOP, DROP, and ROLL** if their clothes should catch on fire.

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## FIRE PREVENTION GUIDELINES: HANDOUT



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### **Make Your Home Fire Resistant**

- Use fire-resistant materials like stone, brick, and metal to protect your home. Avoid using wood materials that offer the least fire protection.
- Reduce flammable chemicals and materials in your home and store them away from an ignition source.
  - Buy only as much of a chemical as you think you will use. Leftover material can be shared with neighbors or donated to a business, charity, or government agency. For example, excess pesticide could be offered to a greenhouse or garden center, and theater groups often need surplus paint.
  - Keep products containing hazardous or flammable materials in their original containers and never remove the labels unless the container is corroding. Corroding containers should be repackaged and clearly labeled.
  - Store flammable materials, liquids, and solvents in metal containers outside the home, at least 30 feet away from structures and wooden fences.
- Cover all exterior vents, attics, and eaves with metal mesh screens no larger than 6 millimeters.
- Use fire-resistant draperies for added window protection.
- Make sure water sources, such as hydrants and ponds, are accessible to the fire department.
- Avoid using lighted candles. If you do use candles, ensure they are in sturdy metal, glass, or ceramic holders and placed where they cannot be easily knocked down.
- Set a good example by using matches, lighters, and fire carefully. Children should never be allowed to play with matches, lighters, or candles.

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FIRE PREVENTION  
GUIDELINES: HANDOUT



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## Be Prepared for a High-Rise Fire Emergency

- Never lock fire exits or doorways, halls, or stairways. Fire doors provide a way out during the fire and slow the spread of fire and smoke. Never prop stairway or other fire doors open.
- Learn your building evacuation plan. Make sure everyone knows what to do if the fire alarm sounds. Plan and practice your escape plan together.
- Be sure your building manager posts evacuation plans in high-traffic areas, such as lobbies.
- Learn the sound of your building's fire alarm and post emergency numbers near all telephones.
- Know who is responsible for maintaining the fire safety systems. Make sure nothing blocks these devices and promptly report any sign of damage or malfunction to the building management.
- Do not assume anyone else has already called the fire department.
- Immediately call your local emergency number. Early notification of the fire department is important. The dispatcher will ask questions regarding the emergency. Stay calm and give the dispatcher the information requested.

## Maintain Chimneys (if relevant)

- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned annually by a certified specialist.
- Insulate chimneys and place spark arresters on top.
- Extend the chimney at least 3 feet above the roof.
- Remove branches hanging above and around the chimney.

## Let Your Landscape Defend Your Property

- Trim grass on a regular basis up to 100 feet surrounding your home.
- Create defensible space by thinning trees and brush within 30 feet around your home.
- Beyond 30 feet, remove dead wood, debris, and low tree branches.
- Landscape your property with fire-resistant plants and vegetation to prevent fire from spreading quickly.
- Stack firewood at least 30 feet away from your home and other structures.

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## FIRE PREVENTION GUIDELINES: HANDOUT



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### **Follow Local Burning Laws**

- Do not burn trash or other debris without proper knowledge of local burning laws, techniques, and the safest times of day and year to burn. Contact your local fire department for a permit and information on conditions.
- Before burning debris in a wooded area, make sure you notify local authorities and obtain a burning permit.
- Use an approved incinerator with a safety lid or covering with holes no larger than 3/4-inch.
- Create at least a 10-foot clearing around the incinerator before burning debris.

### **Avoid Electrical Fires**

- Routinely check your electrical appliances and wiring.
- Frayed wires can cause fires. Replace all worn, old, or damaged appliance cords immediately.
- Replace any electrical tool if it causes even small electrical shocks, overheats, shorts out, or gives off smoke or sparks.
- Keep electrical appliances away from wet floors and counters; pay special attention to electrical appliances in the bathroom and kitchen.
- Buy electrical products evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Keep clothes, curtains, and other potentially combustible items at least 3 feet from all heaters.
- If an appliance has a three-prong plug, use it only in a three-slot outlet. Never force it to fit into a two-slot outlet or extension cord.
- Do not allow children to play with or around electrical appliances like space heaters, irons, and hair dryers.
- Use safety closures to "child-proof" electrical outlets.
- Use electrical extension cords wisely; never overload extension cords or wall sockets.
- Immediately shut off, then professionally replace, light switches that are hot to the touch and lights that flicker.

# AN OUNCE OF FIRE PREVENTION

## FIRE PREVENTION GUIDELINES: HANDOUT



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### **Avoid Cooking Fires**

- Plug microwave ovens and other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance, as it can overload the circuit and cause a fire.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire – potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels, or curtains – away from your stovetop.
- Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire if it comes into contact with a gas flame or electric burner.
- When young children are present, use the stove's back burners whenever possible. Never hold a child while cooking, drinking, or carrying hot foods or liquids.
- When children are old enough, teach them to cook safely. Supervise them closely.

### **Know How and When to Fight Cooking Fires**

- When in doubt, just get out. When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. Call 911 or the local emergency number after you leave.
- Always keep an oven mitt and a lid nearby when you are cooking. If a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan (make sure you are wearing the oven mitt).
- Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan. To keep the fire from restarting, leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.
- In case of an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you or your clothing.
- If you have a fire in your microwave oven, turn it off immediately and keep the door closed. Never open the door until the fire is completely out. Unplug the appliance if you can safely reach the outlet.

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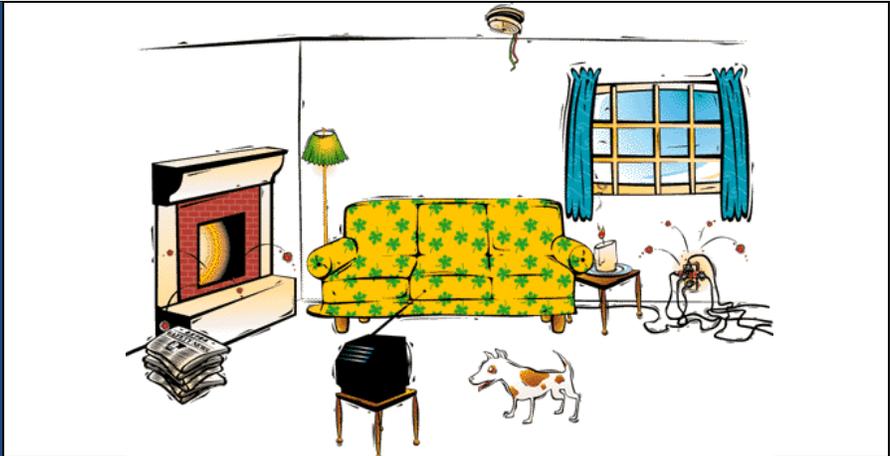


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## ACTIVITY #1: REDUCE FIRE RISKS

Review the Fire Prevention Guidelines handout. Next, identify or circle the fire hazards in each room below.

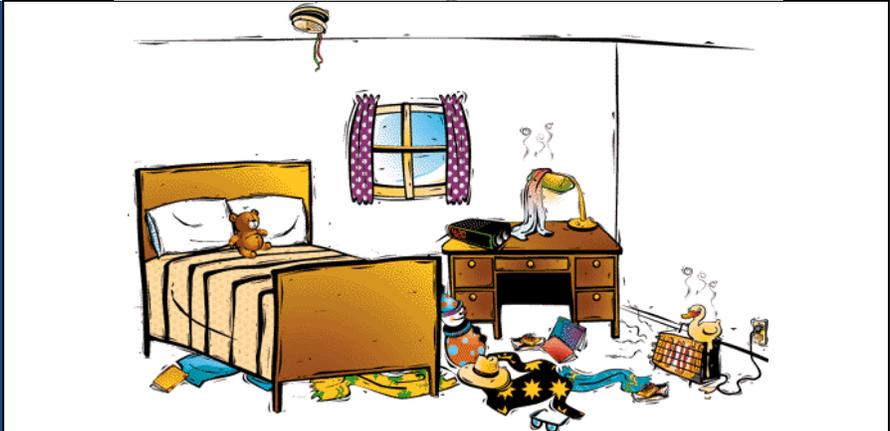
Living Room



Kitchen



Bedroom



Source: <http://www.firesafety.gov/kids>

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## ACTIVITY #1: REDUCE FIRE RISKS

Next, have all household members help you conduct a room-by-room search for possible fire hazards. At the end of the search, check off the following items that apply:

- All smoke alarms work when tested monthly.
- All escape routes are clear of clutter and easily accessible.
- Curtains and other fabrics that can burn are away from the stovetop or other heat sources.
- Electrical cords are in good condition (not damaged).
- Appliances and lights are plugged into separate electrical outlets. Note: Try to unplug all appliances when you are done using them.
- All extension cords in use are safe (not under carpets or across walking areas). Note: Extension cords are not permanent solutions for power needs.
- The clothes dryer has a clean vent and filter (no lint build-up). Note: Be sure to clean the lint tray in your dryer before each use and check around the drum for any accumulated lint. Do not let your dryer continue running when you leave your home.
- If you allow smoking, cigarettes are not left unattended and large, deep ashtrays are used.
- Flammable materials, liquids, and solvents are stored safely away from heat sources.
- Firewood, gasoline, newspapers, and other flammable materials are not stored close to the home and other structures.
- Water sources, such as hydrants and ponds, are accessible to the fire department.
- Matches, lighters, and candles are not within reach of children.
- The furnace/air conditioning system has been inspected in the past year.
- The chimney has been inspected and cleaned in the past year.
- Outdoor grills are kept at least 3 feet away from your home.
- Grass up to 100 feet surrounding the home is kept trimmed. Note: You should try to create defensible space by thinning trees and brush within 30 feet around your home.

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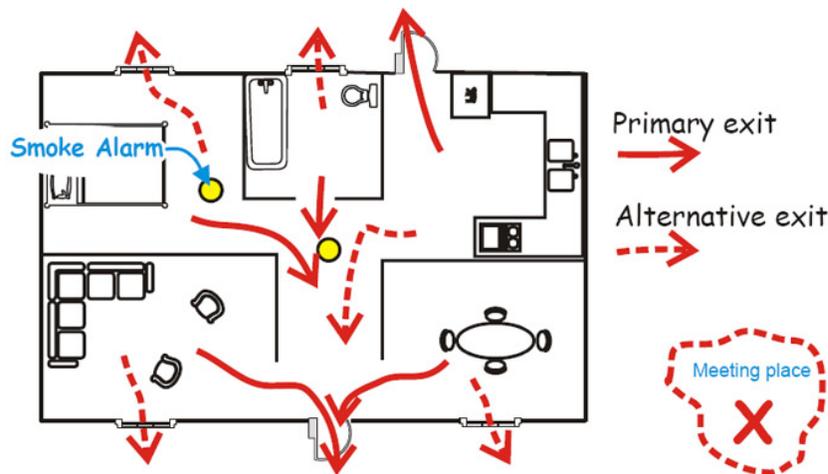


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## ACTIVITY #2: HAVE A PLAN

Fire prevention requires that everyone in your household participate. Complete the following steps with members of your household.

- **Create a Fire Escape Plan:** Installing working smoke alarms is essential. However, they can only save lives if everyone knows how to get out of the home quickly and safely. To develop a fire escape plan, create a map showing the escape routes. If you have younger children, use color markers and construction paper to make the project fun. As you can see in the example below, your map should identify the locations of the smoke detectors, at least two exits out of each room, and the outdoor meeting place. Remember to map each floor.



If you live in an apartment building, make sure you are familiar with the building's evacuation plan. In case of fire, use the stairs – never use the elevator.

- **Review Your Plan.** Make sure everyone knows how to escape when the smoke alarm sounds, whether awake or sleeping at the time. Most importantly, **ONCE OUT – STAY OUT!** Practice your fire escape plan. Demonstrate how to exit, including:
  - Feeling doors with the back of your hand before opening them. If the door feels hot, use your second exit to get out fast.
  - Crawling low to avoid heat and smoke. Cover your mouth.
- **Make Sure Everyone Can Exit Safely.** If there are infants or family members with mobility limitations, assign someone to assist them. If you or someone in your household uses a wheelchair, make more than one exit from your home wheelchair accessible in case the primary exit is blocked in a disaster. Smoke detectors can provide both audio and visual warnings. Select the technology that your household members need.
- **Conduct a Drill.** Practice the escape plan at least twice a year, making sure that everyone is involved – from infants to grandparents. Use a cardboard cutout of flames to block exits so that individuals will have to find another exit point. Practice escaping in the dark or with closed eyes.