



# Sanford Fire Department

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## FIRE PREVENTION BASICS

Fire Safety begins at home. Every family should know the basics of how to prevent fires at home and what to do in case there is a fire. The Fire Department's Office of Fire Prevention has prepared several brochures to help the whole family learn about what steps to take to ensure that everyone's home is *fire-safe*. So, invest a few minutes and learn how to BE SAFE.

### KITCHEN COOKING

The preparation of the home cooked meal is the leading cause of home fires and fire injuries. Unattended cooking accounts for 33% of these fires. Other leading causes are placing combustible items too close to the heat source and various electrical defects.

There are a variety of situations that lead to unattended cooking fires. The most common is when the cook becomes distracted and leaves the kitchen. The most common distractions are attending to children, answering phone calls, watching television and answering doorbells.

In order to drastically reduce your risk of a cooking fire, follow this recipe for safety:

While cooking,

- Stay in the kitchen, don't leave cooking food unattended. (stand by your pan!)
- Wear short or tight fitting sleeves. (Long loose sleeves are more likely to catch on fire or get caught on pot handles)
- Don't become distracted.
- Enforce a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet around your stove. Turn pot handles inward facing the wall to prevent burns caused by overturning or spills.
- Keep the area around the stove clear of towels, papers, pot holders or anything that could burn.
- Cook at indicated temperatures settings rather than higher settings.
- Regularly clean your cooking equipment so that there are no cooking materials or grease accumulation.
- Have a pot lid handy to smother a pan fire. Do not attempt to pick up the pot or pan. Shut off the heat and cover the fire with a lid.
- Do not use water. It will cause splashing and spread the fire.

**REMEMBER:** By planning ahead, you can do a lot to prevent a fire. But once a fire starts in your home, there are only three things to do: first get out, close the door behind you, then call 911 from a neighbor's home. Don't go back into a burning building, no matter what. If you think someone is trapped inside, tell the firefighters when they arrive.

## **PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS / FIRE EXTINGUISHER BASICS**

The proper use of portable fire extinguishers can extinguish many fires while they are still small. You should be aware, however, that the Sanford Fire Department (SFD) should be notified without delay as soon as any fire is discovered.

The SFD regulates the number, type, and placement of the portable fire extinguishers that are required for any public building. These portable fire extinguishers are an important part of an overall fire safety program. It is important to keep in mind that the successful use of portable fire extinguishers depends on the following:

- the portable fire extinguishers are properly located and in working order.
- the portable fire extinguishers are of the correct type.
- the fire is discovered while still small enough for use of the portable fire extinguishers to be effective.
- the fire is discovered by persons who are ready, willing, and able to use the portable fire extinguishers.

Also, you should know that portable fire extinguishers are valuable for immediate use on small fires. They contain a limited amount of extinguishing material and need to be used properly so that this material is not wasted.

In some cases, OSHA may require that an employer provide education to its employees on how to use the portable fire extinguishers that are located in the workplace. Generally, operation instructions are provided on the side of the fire extinguisher. They clearly describe how to use the extinguisher in case of an emergency. An example of these instructions is shown below.



**P A S S -- Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep**

## **USING HEATERS IN THE COLDER WEATHER**

When the temperature drops, residents will sometimes use portable heating devices to help keep their homes warm. While many are anxious to get their units up and running quickly, safe measures and precautions should always be taken to ensure a safe, warm home through the upcoming winter. Heating equipment is the leading cause of home fires during the months of December, January and February, and trails only cooking equipment in home fires year-round.

### **Space Heaters**

Residents that utilize wall space heaters or other heating device should remember to pull all furniture and other combustible items at least three feet away from any heating devices. Space heaters are temporary heating devices and should only be used for a limited time each day and should never be connected to an outlet with an extension cord. When not in use, be sure to unplug the unit and let it cool down if you will be storing the unit. Keep a window ajar or the door open in a room where an un-vented heater is in use. Never use heaters to dry clothing or other combustibles. Electric heaters with frayed or damaged cords should never be used. Young children should be kept away from any appliance that has hot surfaces that can cause burns.

### **Fireplaces**

Before using the fireplace for the first time in a season, make sure the flue is open. The flue is a trap door that keeps heat out in the summer and cool air from coming in when the fireplace is not in use. You can check it by looking up the chimney to see if you are able to see daylight. If there are any obstructions, remove them. If not removed, these obstructions will cause carbon monoxide to back up into your home. Carbon monoxide is a deadly, odorless and invisible gas. Artificial logs made from wax and sawdust should be used one at a time. Pressure-treated wood should not be burned in stoves or fireplaces because it contains toxic chemicals that can make you sick. Never leave a fireplace unattended. Chimneys and vents should be inspected and cleaned annually. Have chimneys inspected and cleaned when necessary by a professional chimney sweep. Creosote is an unavoidable product of wood-burning stoves and fireplaces. Creosote builds up in connectors and chimney flues and can cause a chimney fire. Don't burn newspapers or other trash in a fireplace because they burn too hot and can ignite a chimney fire.

### **Gas or Electric Furnaces**

Gas or electric furnaces that have not been used for several months will most likely have a build-up of dust and dirt on heating elements. This can cause a burning smell and even a light haze of white smoke when first operated for the season. This smell and haze are not harmful, and will take only several uses before all the dust and dirt on the heating unit are burnt away. To be safe, try to run the furnace on a warm day while opening all windows so the smell can escape. If the smoke turns black and the furnace starts to rumble leave the building immediately and call the fire department by dialing 911.

### **Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

Test your home smoke alarms at least once per week. Do this by pressing the test button on the unit. Some newer models also feature the ability to test the unit with a

flashlight as well. If you are unsure as to whether your unit has this feature, check your operations manual or consult the manufacturer.

If you do not have one already installed, install a carbon monoxide detector. Carbon monoxide is a tasteless, odorless, invisible gas, which is absorbed by the human body 200 times faster than oxygen. Carbon monoxide will cause people to fall into a deep sleep and cause death. Gas fireplaces, gas stoves, barbecues, gas furnaces, automobiles, propane appliances and any other device that produces a flame will produce carbon monoxide.

### **Coal and Wood Burning Stoves**

Use coal only if specifically approved by the stove manufacturer. Gasoline or other flammable liquids should never be used to start a wood fire since it might explode or flare up. Never use gasoline in kerosene heaters. Gasoline or other flammable liquids should never be used to start a wood fire since it might explode or flare up. The directions on artificial logs made from wax and sawdust say they should be used one at a time in fireplaces and never used in wood stoves. This is because the heat can melt the log causing it to flare up or leak burning liquid from the appliance. Pressure-treated wood should not be burned in stoves or fireplaces because it contains toxic chemicals that can make you sick.

### **Barbecues**

Barbecues should never be used indoors or as a heating device. Barbecues produce large amounts of carbon monoxide.