

# Fire Safety Tips - 2005!



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## **FIRE & LIFE SAFETY**

Candles may look nice, but they're a growing fire threat in our communities. And knowing the facts about candles is a key to fire safety. That's why the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) has chosen "Use Candles with Care" as the theme for Fire Prevention Week (FPW), **October 9-15, 2005**. Remember, it's up to *YOU* to "Fall" back on Fire & Life Safety.

### **Fire Deaths**

- In 2003, there were 388,500 reported home fires in the United States, resulting in 3,145 deaths, 13,650 injuries and \$5.9 billion in direct property damage. In the U.S., someone dies from a home fire roughly every three hours.
- In Canada, someone is fatally injured in a residential fire roughly every 32 hours.
- Candles are responsible for a growing percentage of home fires. In 2001, candles were responsible for 6% of the fatalities that occurred as a result of home fires.
- Roughly half of all home fire deaths in the U.S. resulted from fires that were reported between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. But only one-quarter of home fires occur between those hours.
- Although children five and under make up about 7% of the country's population, they accounted for 12% of the home fire deaths, assigning them a risk almost twice the national average.
- Older adults are also at greater risk of dying in a home fire than the population at large. Adults 65 and older face a risk twice the average, while people 85 and older have a risk that is three-and-a-half times more than average.
- Smoking was the leading cause of home fire deaths overall, but in the months of December, January and February, smoking and heating equipment caused similar shares of fire deaths.

### **Candles**

- Over the last decade, candle fires have tripled. In 2001 alone, an estimated 18,000 home fires started by candles were reported to fire departments, an all time high. These fires resulted in 190 deaths, 1,450 injuries and an estimated property loss of \$265 million.
- Forty-one percent of U.S. home candle fires begin in the bedroom, causing 24% of the deaths resulting from these fires.

- A special study found that the candles were being used for light in one-third of the fatal home candle fires, generally because power to the home had been shut off due to nonpayment (24%) or as a result of a temporary power outage (7%).
- December had almost twice the number of home candle fires of an average month.
- Seven out of 10 households in the U.S. now use candles, with younger adults more likely to use them than older adults.

### **Candle Safety Tips**

Candles may be pretty to look at but they are growing cause of home fires—and home fire deaths. Remember, a candle is an open flame, meaning that it can easily ignite any combustible material nearby. And because candle fires spread so quickly, it's essential that you have working [smoke alarms](#) in your residence and a [home fire escape plan](#) ready to go. Follow these tips to help you use candles safely.

### **Reducing the risk**

- Never leave a burning candle unattended. Extinguish all candles when you leave the room or go to bed. Almost half of all home fires started by candles begin in the bedroom. NFPA discourages the use of candles in the bedroom and other areas where people may fall asleep.
- Keep candles at least one foot away from anything that can burn including curtains, blinds, wallpaper, clothing or any other material that can catch fire.
- Don't place lit candles in windows or near doorways where drafts could bring combustibles in contact with the flame.
- Keep candles away from flammable liquids.

### **“Candle with Care”**

- Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily, are made from a material that can't burn, and are large enough to collect dripping wax.
- Place candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface—away from edges and any place where they could be knocked over by kids or pets.
- Light candles carefully. Keep your hair and any loose clothing away from the flame.
- Keep candle wicks trimmed to one-quarter inch.
- Extinguish candles when they burn down to within two inches of their holder or any decorative material.
- Extinguish candles carefully, using a long-handled candle snuffer or a soft, directed breath. Be careful not to splatter wax when extinguishing. Do not leave the room until wicks have stopped glowing.
- Avoid using candles during a power outage. Have flashlights and battery-powered lighting on hand for emergency lighting.

### **Candles and kids**

- Never leave a child unattended in a room with a burning candle.
- Don't allow kids or teens to burn candles in their bedrooms.
- Don't let kids play with candles or dripping wax – or with materials that could catch fire near candles.
- Store matches and lighters up high and out of children's sight and reach, preferably in a locked cabinet.

### **Smoke alarms**

- Since the 1970's, when smoke alarms first became widely available to households in the United States, the fire death rate has been reduced by half.
- Roughly 70% of home fire deaths result from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

- A 2004 U.S. telephone survey found that 96% of the households surveyed had at least one smoke alarm.
- About half of home fire deaths result from fires in the small percentage of homes with no smoke alarms.
- In one-quarter of the reported fires in homes equipped with smoke alarms, the devices did not work, most often because of missing, disconnected, or dead batteries.
- Smoke alarms that are 10 years old have a 30% chance of failing to work properly and should be replaced.

### **Home escape planning**

- According to a 2004 NFPA survey, only one in four Americans has devised and practiced a plan to escape from the home during a fire.
- While 66% of Americans have an escape plan in case of a fire, only 35% of those with a plan have practiced it.
- Eighteen to 24-year-olds are the least likely to have even developed an escape plan.

### **Cooking**

- More fires start in the kitchen than in any other place in the home.
- Cooking fires are the #1 cause of home fires and home fire injuries.
- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home cooking fires.

### **Heating**

- During the months of December, January and February, heating equipment is the leading cause of home fires. About two-thirds of home heating fire deaths were caused by portable or fixed space heaters.
- In 2001, an estimated 54,900 home heating equipment fires were reported to U.S. fire departments, resulting in 220 civilian deaths, 1,120 civilian injuries and \$502 million in property damage.

### **Smoking materials**

- Smoking materials (i.e., cigarettes, cigars, pipes, etc.) are the leading cause of fire deaths and the third leading cause of fire injuries in the U.S.
- Roughly one of every four fire U.S. deaths in 2001, (excluding September 11) was attributed to smoking materials.
- The most common material first ignited in home smoking material-related fires was trash or waste, followed by mattresses and bedding, and upholstered furniture.

### **Electrical**

- Electrical distribution equipment (including wiring, switches, outlets, cords and plugs, fuse and circuit breaker boxes, lighting fixtures and lamps) was the fifth leading cause of home fires and the sixth leading cause of fire deaths in the United States between 1999 and 2002.
- The most common types of electrical distribution equipment involved in home fires are 1) fixed wiring, 2) lamps or lighting, and 3) cords or plugs.

### **Home fire sprinklers**

- Properly installed and maintained, automatic fire sprinkler systems help save lives.
- When sprinklers are present, the chances of dying in a fire and the average property loss per fire are both cut by one-half to two-thirds, compared to where sprinklers are not present.
- Automatic fire sprinklers and smoke alarms together cut your risk of dying in a fire in a one- or two-family dwelling by 82% when compared to having neither.