

Appliance Safety in Your Home

From all around us, we hear safety messages and it is easy to forget the impact these simple reminders have in making our home a safe place to live. Fires can happen to any of us, but the good news is that most fires are predictable and preventable. Electrical hazards cause up to 150,000 fires per year, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Take a few valuable moments, go room-to-room and do a quick safety check. See if you are doing all you can do to prevent an appliance fire in your home.

Kitchen and Bathrooms:

- ✓ Do you unplug appliances that are not needed when they are not in use; especially ones that have a heat source?
- ✓ Keep the stove and oven surfaces free of grease, as well as, the stove vent/fan cover. Clean it monthly. Keep all things that can burn, 3 feet from these sources of heat. Put a lid on a pan with a grease fire. Turn off the heat and let the fire put itself out because of the lack of oxygen. Turn the vent off when there is a fire to prevent it going into the ducts.
- ✓ If there is a fire in a microwave or conventional oven, close the door. Hit the “off” button. Let the fire go out.
- ✓ *Never leave cooking unattended; an appliance is only as safe as it’s operator.*

Dryer, Furnace and Water Heater:

- ✓ Remember dryers are large sources of heat. Don’t put things on top the dryer when using it. Empty the lint trap after every use, clean out the dryer vent from the house to the outside (per manufacturer instructions) at least every year.
- ✓ Have your water heater set 120 degrees or less, to prevent burns and scalds.
- ✓ Change your furnace filter once a month or per manufacturer recommendations. Have both the water heater/ furnace checked by a professional once a year. Any appliance that burns fuel inefficiently has the potential of leaking carbon monoxide into the air around you.
- ✓ Remember that natural gas appliances have open flames. Be sure the areas around gas appliances and vent pipes are kept clear of combustible materials like laundry, paper, paints, solvents and propane cylinders.
- ✓ Call your gas company if you smell the odor of natural gas when the appliance is off.

Living Room and Bedrooms:

- ✓ If you use a space heater, remember to keep anything that can burn, at least 3 feet away. Never leave a room with it on. If you have to use a kerosene heater, make sure it is used in a well-vented area. Add fuel to them only when it is cool.
- ✓ If you have a torchiere lamp, consider it a heat source.

General All Over the House:

- ✓ Check all the cords for cuts, fraying or burn spots. Don't let them get in knots or let pets chew on them.
- ✓ It is generally recommended that there not be more than 2 cords per outlet, unless it is made for more. Overloading carries too much electricity, which generates heat in undetectable amounts. The heat causes wear on the internal wiring system and can ignite a fire.
- ✓ Remember only use extension cords for temporary use, never permanent.
- ✓ Never place cords under rugs or place where you could be walking on them. This can break down the normal insulation, putting you at risk.
- ✓ Always dry your hands before touching electric appliances.

Appliance safety with children:

- ✓ Pause and ask yourself, is my child old /tall enough to use this appliance safely?
- ✓ Can they read and understand the graphics, knobs or dials? Do they have adult supervision?
- ✓ Do you have safety systems installed to keep smaller children from turning on appliances or playing with the outlets in your house?
- ✓ Teach them to unplug cords by the plug, not the cord. This could cause a burn or fire.

It only takes one tragic moment to change your life when you have a fire. Time better spent, is in preventing one.