Fire/EMS Safety Tips

ALTERNATE HEATING SOURCES

Keep at least three feet of clearance between your alternate heat source and anything combustible.

Never leave a heater on when you are not in the room or when you go to sleep.

Never leave children or pets unattended near heating sources.

Only use heaters that have been tested to the latest safety standards and certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). These heaters will have the most up-to-date safety features like automatic shut-offs.

Only install and use heaters according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

BIKE SAFETY

It's a beautiful day — the sun is shining, the birds are chirping. What could be more perfect than a bike ride? But wait! Before you pull your bike out of the garage, let's find out how to stay safe on two wheels.

WHY IS BICYCLE SAFETY SO IMPORTANT?

Bike riding is a lot of fun, but accidents happen. Every year, about 300,000 kids go to the emergency department because of bike injuries. Some of these injuries are so serious that children die, usually from head injuries.

A head injury can mean brain injury. That's why it's so important to wear your bike helmet. Wearing one doesn't mean you can be reckless, but a helmet will provide some protection for your head and brain in case you fall down.

A HELMET HOW-TO

Bike helmets are so important that the U.S. government has created safety standards for them. Your helmet should have a sticker that says it meets standards set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). If your helmet doesn't have a CPSC sticker, ask your mom or dad to get you one that does. Always wear a bike helmet, even if you are going for a short ride.

Your bike helmet should fit you properly. You don't want it too small or too big. Never wear a hat under your bike helmet. If you're unsure if your helmet fits you well, ask someone at a bike store.

Once you have the right helmet, you need to wear it the right way so it will protect you. It should be worn level and cover your forehead. Don't tip it back so your forehead is showing. The straps should always be fastened. If the straps are flying, it's likely to fall off your head when you need it most. Make sure the straps are adjusted so they're snug enough that you can't pull or twist the helmet around on your head.

Take care of your bike helmet and don't throw it around. That could damage the helmet and it won't protect you as well when you really need it. If you do fall down and put your helmet to the test, be sure to get a new one. They don't work as well after a major crash.

Many bike helmets today are lightweight and come in cool colors. If you don't love yours as it is, personalize it with some of your favorite stickers. Reflective stickers are a great choice because they look cool and make you more visible to people driving cars.

BEAT THE HEAT

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, climate change and extreme heat causes more deaths each year than lightning strikes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes combined!

WHO IS AT RISK?

The elderly, people with a chronic medical problem, homeless, outdoor workers, and athletes are most at risk to heat sickness.

WARNING SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

Muscle cramping might be the first sign of heat-related illness, and may lead to heat exhaustion or stroke.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Here is how you can recognize heat exhaustion and heat stroke and what to do:

Heat Exhaustion • Heavy sweating • Weakness • Cold, pale, and clammy skin • Fast, weak pulse • Nausea or vomiting • Fainting	**What You Should Do:** • Move to a cooler location. • Lie down and loosen your clothing. • Apply cool, wet cloths to as much of your body as possible. • Sip water. • If you have vomited and it continues, seek medical attention immediately.
Heat Stroke • High body temperature (above 103°F)* • Hot, red, dry or moist skin • Rapid and strong pulse • Possible unconsciousness	**What You Should Do:** • Call 911 immediately — **this is a medical emergency**. • Move the person to a cooler environment. • Reduce the person's body temperature with cool cloths or even a bath. • Do **NOT** give fluids.

To learn more visit: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Extreme Heat & Your Health.

CANDLE SAFETY TIPS

Every candle is a potential fire hazard if care is not used. When used improperly, a candle can cause significant loss of life, injury and loss of property. Here are a few candle safety tips to follow:

- Do not place candles near combustible materials. Remember to leave a one-foot circle of safety around any burning candle.
- Place candles in glass or ceramic containers.
- Place candles on a protected, flat, heat resistant, dry, sturdy surface.
- Never leave children or pets unattended in a room with an open flame candle.
- Do not place candles on window ledges or near entryways. The potential air draft can "fan" the flame, potentially catching curtains or other materials on fire.
- Keep burning candles within sight at all times.
- Always extinguish candles before leaving the home. When you go out, blow it out!
- Remember, candles can present fire hazards outdoors on decks and patios as well as inside your home.

For more information, you can visit the National Candle Association's or NFPA's websites.

CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

Effective January 1, 2007, Illinois requires carbon monoxide alarms.
What is carbon monoxide? Often called the silent killer, carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless, and tasteless. It is produced when any fuel such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane oil, and methane is burned incompletely. When these fuels do not burn properly, carbon monoxide can build up and cause sickness or even death. Statistics show that carbon monoxide kills about 200 people in the U.S. every year. Under the legislation passed, homeowners and landlords are required to install carbon monoxide detectors within 15 feet of all rooms used for sleeping. This law applies only to those occupancies that use fossil fuel to cook, heat or produce hot water or is connected to an enclosed garage.

For more information about the law, please read the Carbon Monoxide Alarm Detector Act (Public Act 094-0741).

Safety Measures

- Never burn charcoal inside your home or garage
- Never heat your home with your gas rant or oven
- Always open the chimney flue when you use your fireplace
- Never run a combustible engine, such as your care, lawn mower or snow blower in enclosed areas.

Installation & Safety Tips

- Install CO alarms within 15' of any room used for sleeping in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- Placing additional detectors on every level of a home provides extra protection against carbon monoxide poisoning
- Keep CO alarms clear of dust and debris
- Ensure CO alarms are plugged in all the way into a working outlet or if battery operated, have working batteries
- Test CO alarms at least once a month and replace them according to the manufacturer's instructions

Recognize the Symptoms of CO Poisoning

- Dizziness, nausea, headache and coughing
- Irregular heartbeat
- Pale skin with cherry red lips and ear tips

Prevent CO Poisoning-Play it Safe!
If you experience symptoms:

- Call 911 or the local fire department
- Get fresh air and stay outside

CHRISTMAS/HOLIDAY TREES AND LIGHTING

- Keep tree base immersed in water.
- Do not permit smoking near the tree.
- Use only lights that are Underwriters Laboratories (UL) approved.
- Use flame retardant decorations and paper.
- Inspect lights for frayed or cracked wiring, broken plugs, or defective sockets.
- Do not overload electrical outlets or extension cords.
- Unplug lights at night and when leaving the home.
- Remove trees soon after the holidays and before the needles dry out.

CLOTHES DRYER FIRE HAZARDS

Clothes dryers are an everyday household item that can pose a serious risk of fire if they are not properly maintained. A clothes dryer operates by blowing hot air through a revolving drum. As clothes are dried, lint is produced as water is removed. Lint accumulation, in the dryer and in the dryer vent, can reduce airflow and create a highly flammable fuel source.

Clothes dryer fires account for over 15,000 structure fires, 15 deaths, and 400 injuries annually. “Failure to clean” is the leading factor contributing to clothes dryer fires.

Simple Safety Tips to Prevent a Clothes Dryer Fire

- Have your dryer installed and serviced by a professional.
- Do not use the dryer without a lint filter.
- Make sure you clean the lint filter before or after each load of laundry. Remove lint that has collected and around the drum.
- Rigid or flexible metal venting materials should be used to sustain proper air flow and drying time.
- Once a year, or more often if you notice that it is taking longer than normal for your clothes to dry, clean lint out of the vent pipe or have a dryer lint removal service do it for you.
- Keep dryers in good working order. Gas dryers should be inspected by a professional to make sure that the gas line and connection are intact and free of leaks.
- Make sure the right plug and outlet are used and that the machine is connected properly.
- Follow the manufacturer’s operating instructions and don’t over-load your dryer.
- Do not leave a dryer running if you leave home or when you go to bed.
- Never dry items that have come in contact with flammable substances, such as cooking oil, gasoline, and paint thinner, or alcohol.
- Keep the dryer area clear of things that can burn, such as boxes or clothing.
- Check the outdoor vent to make sure it is not covered by snow or obstructed.

COMBUSTIBLES TOO CLOSE TO A HEATING SOURCE

Putting combustibles too close to a heat source is a leading cause of structure fires.

Safety Tips:

- Keep at least three feet of clearance between a heating source and anything combustible.
- Do not store combustible materials in closed areas or near a heat source

DISCARDED SMOKING MATERIALS

It is important for smokers to know the steps they can take to keep themselves and their families safe from fire.

- Never smoke in bed as mattresses and bedding can catch on fire easily.
- Completely douse butts and ashes with water before throwing them away, as they can smolder and cause a fire.
- Use ashtrays with a wide base so they won't tip over and start a fire.
- Do not smoke in bed because you might fall asleep with a lit cigarette.
- Check furniture for any dropped ashes before going to bed.
- Empty ashes into a fireproof container with water and sand.
- Keep smoking materials away from anything that can burn.
- Never smoke in a home where oxygen is being used. Medical oxygen can explode if a flame or spark is nearby. Even if the oxygen is turned off, it can still catch on fire.
- To prevent a deadly cigarette fire, you must be alert. Don't smoke after taking medicine that makes you tired.
- Keep matches and lighters up high, out of children's sight and reach.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

SAFETY TIPS:

- Replace or repair loose or frayed cords on all electrical devices.
- Avoid overloading outlets. Plug only one high-wattage appliance into each receptacle outlet at a time.
- When possible, avoid the use of "cube taps" and other devices that allow the connection of multiple appliances into a single receptacle.
- Consider having additional circuits or outlets added by a qualified electrician so you do not have to use extension cords.
- Follow the manufacturer's instruction for plugging an appliance into a receptacle outlet.

FIREPLACES AND FIREPLACE ASHES

- Ensure that your chimney is cleaned and inspected by a licensed professional once a year.
- A spark arrestor across the top of a chimney will prevent sparks from igniting your roof.
- Use the proper fuel (seasoned hardwood, pellets, and gas/propane) for your type of system.
- Never use gasoline, kerosene, or other flammable liquids to start a fire.

- Fireplaces should have a sturdy screen across the front to prevent embers from flying or logs from rolling out.

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. Many "non-masonry" fireplace/chimney units have limitations on the amount of heat they can safely withstand.

- Do not discard your ashes into any combustible container such as a paper or plastic bag, a cardboard box, or a plastic trash can.

- When clearing ashes from the fireplace, be sure to put them into a metal container with a lid. Do not discard your ashes into any combustible container such as a paper or plastic bag, a cardboard box, or a plastic trash can.

- Keep your can outside the home, away from your fireplace or stove. Do not place ash containers on decks, porches, or in garages.

- Pour water into ash containers to make sure the ashes are cool.

- Teach all family members to be safe with ashes from your fireplace or wood-burning stove.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives; but portable extinguishers have limitations. Because fire grows and spreads so rapidly, the number one priority for residents is to get out safely.

Safety Tips

- Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area, such as a wastebasket, and is not growing; everyone has exited the building; the fire department has been called or is being called; and the room is not filled with smoke.
- To operate a fire extinguisher, remember the word PASS:
  – **P**ull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism.
  – **A**im low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
  – **S**queeze the lever slowly and evenly.
  – **S**weep the nozzle from side-to-side.
- For the home, select a multi-purpose extinguisher (can be used on all types of home fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy as to be difficult to handle.
- Choose a fire extinguisher that carries the label of an independent testing laboratory.
- Read the instructions that come with the fire extinguisher and become familiar with its parts and operation before a fire breaks out. Local fire departments or fire equipment distributors often offer hands-on fire extinguisher trainings.
- Install fire extinguishers close to an exit and keep your back to a clear exit when you use the device so you can make an easy escape if the fire cannot be controlled. If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately.
- Know when to go. Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary element is safe escape. Every household should have a home fire escape plan and working smoke alarms.
- A fire extinguisher is recommended to be examined monthly, tested yearly and replaced if the gauge is not in the green or its more than ten years old.

FIREWORKS SAFETY

- Though they can be exciting, festive and fun, it is important to remember that fireworks are also dangerous (CDC, 2000). In 2005, an estimated 10,800 people were treated in U.S. emergency departments for fireworks-related injuries (Greene & Joholske, 2006). The U.S. National Fire Protection Association and CDC strongly recommend that fireworks be used only by professionals.

- **SPECIAL DRY WEATHER NOTE:** All fireworks pose a significant danger of starting grass or brush fires that can easily spread to other structures due to the extremely dry weather conditions. The best option is to leave all fireworks for the professionals who have firefighting personnel standing by during the shows.
- **When do these injuries happen?** Typically, 60% of injuries from fireworks in the United States occur in the month surrounding the July 4th holiday (Greene & Joholske, 2006).
- **What types of fireworks cause injuries?** Between June 18 and July 18, 2005, firecrackers (26%), sparklers (17%), and rockets (17%) accounted for most of the injuries seen in emergency departments. Sparklers were associated with over half of the estimated injuries among children under 5 years, during the same time period (Greene & Joholske 2006).
- **Who is likely to be injured?** During the month around Independence Day (July 4), children 14 years and younger sustained about 45% of injuries related to fireworks (Greene & Joholske 2006).
- **What kinds of injuries occur?** Injuries from fireworks most often affect the hands, eyes, and the head, face, and ear (Greene & Joholske, 2006).
- Under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act, the federal government banned the sale of the largest and most dangerous fireworks to consumers. Some states have banned the general public's use of fireworks altogether. Between 2000-2005, more than one third of the fireworks-related deaths involved professional devices that were illegally sold to consumers (CPSC, 2006). The safest way to prevent fireworks-related injuries is to leave fireworks displays to trained professionals. Click here for a printable brochure.

FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS

Safety Tips:

- Use flammable liquids outside whenever possible.
- Never smoke while using flammable liquids. This includes filling up a vehicle.
- Store flammable liquids in approved safety cans.
- Never refuel power mowers, chain saws, or other gas-powered machinery while they are hot. Wait until the machine is cool to the touch before refueling.
- Wipe up spills immediately.
- Store flammable liquids outside the home, in a cool, well-ventilated area, away from any possible heat source.
- Never store more than five gallons of flammable liquids

HOME HEATING SAFETY

Home heating comes from a multitude of sources. Often times residents will supplement their main heating system with alternative heat sources such as fireplaces, wood stoves, and portable fuel or electric heaters. It's important to reach residents in your communities early with alternative heating fire safety information so you can stop the fire before it starts.

Heating is one of the leading causes of home fires in the United States. Over 25 percent of these fires started due to improperly maintained heating equipment.

SAFETY TIPS

- Have a heating contractor perform a yearly maintenance check-up of your furnace and ventilation system to ensure efficient, safe operation.
- Be sure all furnace controls and emergency shut offs are in proper working order.
- Leave furnace repairs to qualified specialists. Do not attempt repairs yourself.
- Never store chemicals, chlorine, paint thinners, paint strippers, gasoline, or other flammables near the furnace.
- Make sure there is a free flow of air to the furnace. Keep an area of at least two feet around the furnace clear by removing any boxes or obstructions.

GRILLS

- Grills should be placed at least fifteen (15) feet from any home, building, or combustibles to ensure adequate air circulation.
- Charcoal must be kept dry. Wet charcoal can spontaneously ignite.
- Spare propane bottles should be stored outside away from the home. A backyard shed is a good place.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill. Grills continue to give off heat long after cooking has stopped.
- Never place hot ashes in paper or plastic bags or containers. Only use metal containers.
- Use Underwriters Laboratories (UL) approved electrical starters in place of lighter fluid.
- Never use a charcoal or grill on apartment or condominium balconies or wooden decks. This practice is considered unsafe and is not recommended.

GRILLING SAFETY

Hundreds of fires are started every year by using barbeque grills, and there can be extensive damage. Careless grilling can cost millions of dollars and often, destroys more than property. In order to help you enjoy safe delicious grilling, remember to always do the following:

- Always use flame-resistant barbecue mitts and barbecue tools with long, heat-resistant handles.
- Have proper lid or grill top.
- Keep barbecue grills in a level position at all times. An unstable unit can easily be tipped over.
- Place barbecue grills at lease five feet away from any combustible material.
- Place your grill so that sparks and smoke won’t fly toward buildings, furniture or people.
- Use only enough charcoal to last for the time it will be needed.
- Properly attach your ash catcher to the kettle grill.

- Douse the coals thoroughly with water after grilling.
- Transport, store and use the propane gas cylinder in an upright position.
  In addition, here are some grilling behaviors that should be avoided to help protect you and your family against injury:

- Never leave infants, children or pets near an unattended hot barbeque grill.
- Never add liquid starter to hot or even warm coals.
- Never wear loose clothing around a hot barbeque grill; it could catch on fire.
- Never grill on a wooden deck.
- Never barbeque in a confined space.
- Never use gasoline, kerosene, alcohol or a cigarette lighter to start a fire.
- Never move outdoor barbecues indoors. Smoldering charcoal can build up lethal concentrations of carbon monoxide.
- Never store briquettes outside where they can get wet. When they are dry, they become a flammable solid creating a fire hazard.
- Never discard used briquettes in a cardboard carton or any other combustible container

KITCHENS AND COOKING

- Enforce a “kid-free zone” of three feet around your stove.

- Wear short or tight-fitting sleeves when cooking. Long, loose sleeves are more likely to catch on fire or get caught on pot handles.

- Keep things that can catch fire such as dish towels, curtains, or paper at least three feet away from the stove.

- Do not leave cooking food unattended. Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen, even for a short time, turn off the stove.

- Turn pot handles inward, facing the wall to prevent burns caused by overturning or spills.

- Use potholders or oven mitts to prevent burns when handling hot dishes.

- Regularly clean your cooking equipment so that there is no accumulation of cooking materials, food items, or grease.

- 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.

- If there is an oven fire, turn off the heat, and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you and your clothing. Have the oven serviced before you use it again.

HALLOWEEN SAFETY

From the candy to the costumes, Halloween is a fun-filled time for kids and parents alike, but this festivity can also pose some dangers, especially during a pandemic! It important for everyone to plan ahead as many of the Halloween celebrations involve large crowds, close contact between individuals, and

activities in closed spaces. Here are some alternatives and recommendations provided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for celebrating Halloween safely during this frightful pandemic.

Additional Safety Tips:

- Provide children with flashlights or glow sticks to carry while trick-or-treating. Add reflective tape to costumes to make them more visible to drivers.
- Be sure children wear only flame-retardant costumes. Avoid baggy arms, long costumes and trailing material. They are also a tripping hazard.
- Keep flammable decorations away from heat sources, such as candles, heaters, and stoves. Hay, corn stalks, and dry flowers are highly flammable.
- Avoid decorating with candles; use flashlights instead. However, if you choose candles for decorations, place them in a sturdy holder out of reach of kids and away from combustibles.

As a reminder, if you may have COVID-19 or you may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you should not participate in in-person Halloween festivities and should not give out candy to trick-or-treaters. Have a safe and SPOOKTACULAR Halloween!

LIGHTNING SAFETY

According to the National Fire Protection Association, summer is the peak time of the year for lightning strikes and lightning fires. Here are a few tips to minimize your risk during lightning storms:

- Monitor weather conditions and have a plan before weather becomes worse.
- Go indoors. Remember the phrase, "***When thunders roars, go indoors***." Find a safe enclosed shelter (home, office, shopping center or hard-top vehicle) when you hear thunder.
- Stay away from windows, doors, concrete walls or flooring, and open structures such as porches, convertibles, golf carts, etc..
- Crouch close to the ground with your hands over your ears and your head between your knees if you are caught in open land.
- **ALWAYS** remember to call **9-1-1** and get medical care immediately if you or anyone else is stuck by lightning.

LIGHTNING SAFETY INSIDE YOUR HOME

- Avoid contact with corded phones.
- Avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords. If you plan to unplug any electronic equipment, do so well before the storm arrives.
- Avoid contact with plumbing. Do not wash your hands, do not take a shower, do not wash dishes, and do not do laundry.

For more safety tips on lightning, visit any of the following sites:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: Lightning: Lightning Safety Tips
NFPA: Lightning Facts & Figures
NFPA: Lightning Safety Tips
NFPA: Lightning Safety (downloadable flyer)

MATCHES AND LIGHTERS

Keep matches and lighters out of sight, and out of reach.

Teach young children that fire and fire tools are for grown-ups to use.

Ask young children to tell you when they find matches and lighters, and then place them out of sight and out of reach.

RESIDENTIAL SPRINKLERS

The National Fire Protection Association reports that 3,200 people die in home fire each year. Residential sprinkler system can play a major role in reducing that number. Yet there are many myths and much confusion in the country these days regarding building code changes requiring the installation of residential fire sprinkler systems in new construction. Palos Fire Protection District would like to help clear up some of that confusion.

Modern advances in technology and building techniques have enabled builders to install fire sprinkler systems in homes at a reasonable cost. The Palos Fire Protection District recognizes the effectiveness of fire sprinklers and considering the relatively low cost of installation and maintenance, either requires or recommends sprinkler systems, depending on the jurisdiction. Palos Fire Protection District passed an ordinance on March 18, 2004, requiring all new homes built within their unincorporated Cook County district area also install residential sprinkler systems. There are now over 60 municipalities and districts in the northern Illinois area that requires residential sprinkler protection for all new homes.

Life Safety is the primary goal of a NFPA 13D Sprinkler System. Property protection is a secondary goal. Although smoke detectors are essential in every household, they're designed to detect; not control a fire. Home sprinklers complement the detector's work by providing a way to fight the fire immediately, limiting damage and more importantly, allowing you and your family to safely exit your home.

The sprinkler system is designed to provide protection with a series of pipes and sprinkler heads, which are located throughout your home. Each sprinkler head is designed to individually activate if the ceiling temperature should reach between 135 and 175 degrees. The water from the sprinkler head will help to control and in most instances extinguish the fire. Upon activation of the sprinkler system, an interior bell and exterior white strobe/horn device will activate to provide a local alarm notification

SAFE DISPOSAL OF SHARPS

There are millions of Americans who use needles or other sharps to manage their medical conditions at home. Used needles and other sharps are dangerous to people and pets if not disposed of safely because they can injure people and spread infections that cause serious health conditions.

For this reason, Palos Fire Protection District highly recommends that you take precaution when disposing of any sharps. Below are some related links and printable handouts if you would like to read more on how to get rid of sharps and/or sharp containers when outside of a health care setting.

Best Way to Get Rid of Used Needles & Other Sharps
DOs and DON'Ts of Proper Sharps Disposal
How to Get Rid of a Sharps Container

SMOKE ALARMS

The combination of properly working smoke alarms, a planned and practiced family escape plan, and basic home fire safety awareness is the key to being safer. Keep your family safe by installing smoke alarms and testing them monthly to make sure they work. In addition, follow these safety tips:

- Clean, vacuum, and test smoke alarms regularly.
- Replace the batteries in your smoke alarm at least twice a year and as soon as the alarm “chirps” warning that the battery is low. Special Note: With the introduction of ten-year lithium batteries available for use in smoke alarms, replacement is not needed on a semi-annual basis; however, monthly cleaning and testing remains an important safety measure.
- Replace your smoke alarm every ten years.
- Don’t disable smoke alarms, even temporarily

WINTER FIRE SAFETY

The high cost of home heating fuels and utilities have caused many people to search for alternate sources of home heating. The use of wood burning stoves is growing and space heaters are selling quickly. In addition, we are seeing more fireplaces being put to use burning wood and manmade logs. These methods of heating may be acceptable; however, they’re a major contributing factor in residential fires. These fires can be prevented by following some fire safety tips along the way during this winter season.