

Health Tips

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Health Tip: Home Fire Prevention



In 2006, fire departments responded to nearly 400,000 home fires. Along with significant property damage, severe burns and deaths were caused by these fires that were, in many cases, avoidable. The week of October 5-11 has been designated as Fire Prevention Week by the [National Fire Protection Association](#). The following are a few facts* provided by this organization to help raise awareness of the potential for fire danger. Let this Health Tip serve as a reminder to check your home for fire hazards.

Fact #1 - Cooking fires are the #1 cause of home fires and home fire injuries.

Cooking equipment was involved in almost 150,000 home fires in 2005. This represents the largest single cause for home fires and was responsible for \$878 million in property damage. Worse yet, these fires caused 480 deaths and 4,690 injuries. Unattended cooking is the reason that most of these fires started. Interestingly, electric stoves were responsible for more of these fires than gas stoves.

Fact #2 - Electrical cords and plugs were involved in one-eighth (12%) of the 2002-2005 home electrical distribution and lighting equipment fires, but were responsible for roughly two-fifths (39%) of the deaths.

Electrical devices were implicated in starting almost 21,000 home fires in 2005. Lamps, light bulbs, electrical cords and plugs were involved in starting most of these fires.

Fact #3 - Smoking materials (i.e., cigarettes, cigars, pipes, etc.) are the leading cause of fire deaths in the United States.



Smoking is responsible for causing approximately 25% of fire deaths. In 2002-2005 there were approximately 82,400 fires involving smoking materials. Most of these fires were the result of smoking materials igniting mattresses and

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upholstered furniture.

Fact #4 - Candle fires accounted for an estimated 4% of all reported home fires in 2005.

It's surprising that in one year, something as innocent as candles could have been responsible for starting 15,600 house fires. In addition to causing loss of life, the property loss from these fires is estimated to have cost \$539 million.

Fact #5 - January and December were the peak months for home fires and home fire deaths.

This is not too surprising when you consider the use of heating equipment during these months. Factors related to the occurrence of these fires include the use of space heaters and locating heating equipment too close to flammable materials such as clothing, bedding or upholstered furniture.

Fact #6 - Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home structure fires in half.



The fire death rate in homes with working smoke alarms is 51% less than the rate for homes without this protection. An estimated 890 lives could be saved each year if all homes had working smoke alarms.

During this week, take time to survey your house for potential fire hazards. Have heating equipment inspected and check electrical cords and lighting equipment. Make sure that your smoke alarms are functioning properly and remember to be especially careful when cooking.

*Information from NFPA's Fire Prevention Week Web site, www.firepreventionweek.org.

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