

## Fire Prevention Checklist

Fires can start in many ways, which is why prevention requires a comprehensive approach. This article provides tips for electrical fire safety, proper use of fire extinguishers, and safe candle use.

### **Electric**

You don't have to be an electrician to spot an electrical problem. Simply look out for recurring issues with blown-out fuses or tripped circuit breakers, a tingle when you touch an electrical device, discolored outlets, a burning smell or rubbery odor coming from a device, or flickering lights. Recognizing these early warning signs can reduce the risk of an electrical fire.

#### ***Fuses and circuit breakers***

- If a fuse or circuit breaker blows, have a professional inspect and correct the problem.
- Make sure replacement fuses have the proper amperage rating for the circuit they protect.
- Don't overload wiring by plugging more than one heat-producing device into the same outlet or circuit.

#### ***Electrical Outlets***

- Replace old outlets with new ones that accept three-pronged polarized plugs (only if your circuit has a ground wire).
- Never alter a plug to fit an outdated outlet.
- Use plastic safety covers in unused outlets, especially if children might be in the vicinity.

#### ***Appliances***

- Use only appliances that bear the label of an independent testing lab.
- Keep all heat-producing devices — such as space heaters, microwaves, and toasters — at least three feet away from flammable materials.

#### ***Extension Cords Power Strips***

- Replace cracked or frayed electrical cords immediately.
- Don't pinch electrical cords against walls or furniture, or run them under carpets or across doorways.
- Treat power strips as you would any other electrical outlet: Don't plug in too many items that can overload the circuit or overheat the device.

## Fire extinguishers

While the primary concern in any fire situation is a safe escape, fire extinguishers remain an important element of a fire response plan. Read your fire extinguishers' instructions and become familiar with the operation so that you are prepared should a fire break out. Once you've used a fire extinguisher to put out a fire, watch the area and be prepared to repeat the process if the fire re-ignites. If the extinguisher doesn't immediately stop the fire, leave the area. Afterward, have the fire department inspect the fire site, even if you are sure you have extinguished the fire.

- Only attempt to extinguish a fire that is small, confined and not spreading, if your escape route is obstructed, or if your extinguisher corresponds with the fire type (see **types of fires**).
- Make sure everyone has left the building and that someone has been instructed to call the fire department.
- While operating a fire extinguisher, keep your back to a clear exit and stand six to eight feet away from the fire.
- When operating the fire extinguisher, remember this helpful acronym — **PASS**:
  - **Pull** the pin (or activate the lever mechanism).
  - **Aim** low by pointing the nozzle or hose at the base of the fire.
  - **Squeeze** the lever above the handle to discharge the extinguishing agent (and release to stop).
  - **Sweep** the nozzle or hose from side to side, keeping your aim on the fire's base and moving very carefully toward the flames.

Remember to periodically recharge or replace fire extinguishers according to the manufacturer's instructions.

## Safe candle use

- Select durable, non-flammable candleholders that collect wax and won't tip over easily.
- Place candles securely in holders on uncluttered and sturdy surfaces. Be sure they can't be inadvertently upended.
- Keep wicks trimmed to one-quarter inch.
- Be mindful of your hair and clothing when lighting.
- Extinguish candles when they burn down to within two inches of their holders (or decorative material on holders), and don't leave the area until you see that the wicks have stopped glowing.
- Don't leave unattended children in areas with burning candles.
- Keep burning candles away from all decorations, natural or artificial.

## Types of fires

- **Class A:** paper, wood, other ordinary combustibles
- **Class B:** flammable liquids such as oil and gasoline
- **Class C:** energized electrical equipment such as power tools, wiring, fuse boxes, appliances, TVs, computers, and electric motors