



GILBERT FIRE DEPARTMENT FIRE PREVENTION & SAFETY TIPS

Every year, hundreds of thousands of fires happen in people's homes. Many people think that "It can't happen to me", yet statistics show that most fire injuries and deaths happen in the home.

The primary goal of the Gilbert Fire Department is to prevent fires before they start and to minimize the loss of life and property. Our goal cannot be accomplished without the help of each and every citizen. To help ensure a safer community, the Gilbert Fire Department has developed this booklet on general home fire safety.

Fire Extinguishers

Portable fire extinguishers intended for home use are not designed to be used for large fires or spreading fires. Even when used for small fires, they are useful only under certain conditions.

1. The operator must know how to use the extinguisher before it is needed.
2. Extinguisher is within easy reach and fully charged.
3. Extinguisher is used on the right kind of fire.

There are several classes of fire and different extinguishers are effective on each of the fire classes.

1. Class A - Ordinary combustibles - such as paper, wood, plastic.
 2. Class B - Flammable liquids - such as oil, gasoline, and grease.
 3. Class C - Energized electrical equipment.
- Extinguishers are rated not only for the type of fire they extinguish but also how much fire volume they can extinguish.
 - A multi-purpose extinguisher (A, B, C extinguisher) is recommended for home use.
 - The minimum size extinguisher should have a rating of 1A10BC.
 - The acronym PASS can be used to help you remember how to use a fire extinguisher.
 1. **P** - Pull the pin.
 2. **A** - Aim the nozzle of the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
 3. **S** - Squeeze the handle.
 4. **S** - Sweep the base of the fire with the extinguishing agent.

CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY TIPS

- Use only fresh cut trees.
- Brush tree with hand if needles fall off, tree is dead –do not purchase.
- Keep your tree in water.
- Keep tree away from exits or pathways.
- Keep tree 6' from fireplace or open flame.
- Never use candles or open flame devices on tree.
- Use only U.L. approved lights.
- Use only approved breaker type extension cords.
- Never leave lights on overnight.
- Carefully check Christmas lights for breaks every year.
- Dispose of your tree properly, never burn it in your fireplace.

CANDLES

- Extinguish all candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Keep candles away from items that can catch fire: clothing, books, pajamas, curtains and never use on Christmas trees.
- Use candleholders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily and are made from a non-combustible and flammable material.
- Holders should be large enough to catch melting wax.
- Don't place lit candles in windows, where blinds and curtains can close over them.
- Place candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface and do not use candles where they could be knocked over by children or pets.
- Keep candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids.
- Keep candlewicks trimmed to one quarter inch and extinguish taper and pillar candles when they get to within two inches of the holder or decorative materials. Votives and containers should be extinguished before the last half inch of wax.

Home Smoke Detectors

The majority of fatal home fires happen at night when people are asleep. Contrary to popular belief, the smell of smoke may not wake a sleeping person. An inexpensive home smoke detector is one of the most important items to alert you to a fire. By giving you time to escape, smoke detectors cut the risk of dying in a home fire nearly in half.

- NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) recommends a smoke detector outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.
- Detectors should be mounted high on a wall or ceiling. Gilbert Fire code requires that all the units be wired into the homes electrical system with battery backup. The code also requires that in new homes they be interconnected so that if one goes into alarm, they all will.
- Test all your detectors monthly following manufacturer's instructions and replace the batteries every year.
- Most battery powered units will "chirp" or give some other audible signal when the battery is low.
- Clean your detector at least once a year or more frequently as needed with a vacuum.
- Never paint a smoke detector.
- If your detectors are more than 10 years old, they may begin to lose their effectiveness and should be replaced.

Fireplace

- Have fireplace inspected and cleaned once a year.
- Use only dried wood or commercial fire logs to burn.
- Make sure the damper is open prior to lighting a fire.
- Build the fire on a supporting grate for more efficient burning.
- Keep all flammable materials including furniture several feet away from the fireplace.
- Always use a fireplace screen and always keep it closed.
- Never leave the fire unattended and extinguish the fire before going to bed.
- Do not burn garbage, pinecones, wrapping paper etc. in the fireplace.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors (CO Detectors)

Carbon Monoxide, known by the chemical formula “CO”, is a poisonous gas that kills more than 250 people in the United States each year. CO is a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that is the by-product of incomplete combustion. CO can come from malfunctioning appliances including furnaces, stoves, ovens and water heaters that operate by burning fuels such as natural or liquefied petroleum (LP) gas, oil, wood or coal.

- Have your fuel burning appliances inspected by a qualified technician at least once a year.
- Make sure that the vent pipes for these appliances are clean and free from obstructions to allow for adequate ventilation.
- Install CO detectors outside of sleeping areas and near all fuel burning appliances.
- Keep chemicals away from your CO detector as over a period of time they can damage the sensing mechanism of the detector.
- Follow the installation, safety, and maintenance instruction of the manufacturer.
- Other sources of CO include vehicle exhaust, blocked chimney flues, charcoal grills or any product or appliance that uses fuel to operate.

Kitchen

- The kitchen is one of the most likely places in the home for a fire to start. Good housekeeping and some general guidelines are paramount in preventing kitchen fires.
- Never leave food unattended while cooking.
- Keep the stovetop clean and clear. Wipe up spilled grease and oil immediately as they catch fire easily.
- Keep your clothing and anything that may burn (potholders, towels, paper, or decorations) away from the stove.
- Turn pot handles toward the inside and make sure the stove or oven is off when you are done cooking.
- Unplug small appliances such as toasters and blenders when not in use.
- If grease or other foods catch fire on the stove, turn off the heat and slide a lid over the pan to smother the fire. You may also use a multi-purpose fire extinguisher. If you have a fire extinguisher, make sure it is away from the stove and oven yet is easily accessible. Do not use water or flour as they have the potential to spread the fire.
- For oven fires, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.
- Keep the hood vent screen that is above the stove free from grease build-up.

Flammable Gases

- Propane and butane tanks should be stored outside and out of the sun if possible.
- Never have propane and butane tanks filled completely, there needs to be an air gap in the tank for expansion of the product in increased temperatures.
- Propane and butane vapors are heavier than air and will drop to the ground, spread out and accumulate in low lying areas.
- Natural gas is also extremely flammable. If you suspect a leak, evacuate the building and call 9-1-1.
- Most barbecue grills use propane and should always be used outside in a well ventilated area. In addition, check the hoses and connections on the propane tank for leaks.

Gasoline

- Store only in a container that is labeled and rated for gasoline. One with a self-closing lid is best.
- Never store gasoline in the same space as a gas water heater.
- Do not store more than 10 gallons of gasoline that is for future use.
- Gasoline vapors are heavier than air and will be close to the ground.
- Never use gasoline as a solvent or cleaning agent as the vapors spread rapidly and are ignited easily.
- Do not refuel power equipment such as lawnmowers when they are hot or running.

Household Hazardous Materials

- There are dozens of flammable hazardous materials in your home.
- Hair spray and most aerosol sprays are highly flammable and should not be used around an open flame (such as cigarettes or candles).
- Most nail polish and nail polish removers are also highly flammable.
- Many cleaning supplies are either flammable or can cause chemical burns.
- Pool supplies such as acid can cause serious chemical burns.
- Pool chlorine tablets and pool shock, while not flammable, are oxidizers and will intensify a fire. Be sure to always store chlorine and acid separately.

Matches and Lighters

Children have a natural and healthy interest in fire. If your children show an interest in fire or have been found playing with matches or lighters, it is best to respond calmly. An excellent approach is to explain firmly that these items are not toys, but instead, are tools for adults to use carefully.

- Keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children (locked up if possible).
- Teach very young children to come get an adult if they find matches or a lighter. School age children can be taught to bring matches or lighters to an adult.
- Butane lighters can be very dangerous and can explode when exposed to fire or very high temperatures.

Smokers

Each year, careless smokers start roughly 35,000 home fires. These fires cause more than 1,200 deaths and hundreds of millions of dollars in property loss.

- Check for hidden embers. Cigarettes can smolder for hours under the cushion of a chair before igniting.
- Use ashtrays. Have plenty of deep ashtrays and empty them often. Fill ashtrays with water before dumping the butts into the garbage.
- Never smoke in bed or when you are tired.

E.D.I.T.H - Exit Drills In The Home

Remember, most fires start in the home and most of them happen at night. It is important to develop an escape plan for your family to get out in an emergency.

- Make an escape plan and practice it.
- Draw a floor plan of your home and plan 2 ways out of each room in the house.
- In case of fire, get out fast and stay out. Do not stop for any possessions or pets.
- Choose a meeting place that everyone knows.
Call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's house.
Crawl low under smoke and remember your other escape route if the heat or smoke becomes too intense.
- Test all doors. Before opening a door, make sure there is no fire directly on the other side. With the back of your hand, touch the door and handle. If it is hot, use your 2nd way out, if it is cool, open the door carefully. Be ready to slam it shut if heat and smoke rushes in. Close doors as you proceed, to slow the progress of fire.