



Fire Safety in the Home

L.A. County Fire's Monthly Public Education Campaign

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One of the scariest dangers in any home is the possibility of a fire. Each year more than 2,500 people die and over 12,000 are injured in home fires. Fortunately there are many things that you can do to help prevent fires. The Los Angeles County Fire Department has put together some helpful tips to keep you, your loved ones, and your home safe in case of a fire.

The Characteristics of Fire

Fire has many different characteristics. By having some knowledge of these characteristics, you and your family can be more prepared to survive in case a fire breaks out.

Fire is Fast!

There is little time to get out. In less than 30 seconds a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for thick black smoke to fill a house, making it hard to breathe, or for it to be engulfed in flames. Most deadly fires occur in the home when people are asleep. If you wake up to a fire, you won't have time to grab valuables and other important items because fire spreads too quickly and the smoke is very thick, inhibiting your respiration and eyesight. There is only time to escape. Make sure to get out of the burning building before calling for help.



Fire is Hot!

Heat is more threatening than flames. Since heat rises, when a fire breaks out, the temperature at ground level could be 100 degrees and rise to 600

degrees at eye level. Because of this extreme change in temperature, if you are caught in a fire it is extremely important that you stay as low as possible and crawl to safety. Inhaling any of this extremely hot air can scorch your lungs and melt clothes to your skin. In five minutes, a room can get so hot that everything in it ignites at once; this is called *flashover*.

Fire is Dark!

Fire isn't bright, as most people assume it to be; it is pitch black. Fire starts bright, but quickly produces black smoke and complete darkness. If you wake up to a fire you may be blinded, disoriented and unable to find your way around the home you've lived in for years.

Fire is Deadly!

Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do. Fire uses up vital oxygen that you need to breathe, and produces smoke and poisonous gases that kill. Breathing even small amounts of smoke and toxic gases can make you drowsy, disoriented and short of breath. The odorless, colorless fumes can lull you into a deep sleep before the flames reach your door. You may not wake up in time to escape.

Preventing Home Fires

Most fires begin from improperly discarded cigarettes or originate in the kitchen while cooking. The Los Angeles County Fire Department wants to help keep your home safe from fires. Here are a few tips on how to stay safe:

When cooking:

- Stay in the kitchen when frying, grilling, or boiling food. If you leave the kitchen, make sure to turn off the stove.
- Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled up sleeves to prevent clothes catching fire.
- Keep children at least three feet away from cooking areas around the stove.
- Position BBQ grills at least 10 feet away from siding and deck railings.

If you smoke:

- Smoke outside, and make sure to put out your cigarettes in a can filled with sand.
- Make sure cigarettes and ashes are completely stubbed out before discarding.
- Never smoke in a home where oxygen is used, even if it is turned off. Oxygen can be explosive and makes fire burn hotter and faster
- Be alert! Never smoke in bed!



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