



Fire and Life Safety Bulletin

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Don't Let Electrical Cords Create a Danger in Your House!

Overloaded outlets and undersized electrical extension cords can cause a fire. According to the US Fire Administration, home electrical problems annually account for 67,800 fires, 485 deaths, 2,305 injuries and \$868 million in property losses. Some of these fires are caused by electrical system failures and appliance defects, but many more are caused by misuse and poor maintenance of extension cords.

Use Electrical Cords Safely:

- > Electrical cords and power strips have a designated load capacity; check the label.
- > The wire gauge is determined by the size of wire and how much wattage it can handle. For instance, a 12 gauge wire would be larger and can power larger wattage appliances than a 16 gauge cord.
- > A 16 gauge cord, which is a typical household extension cord, is used for light usage items like lamps, clock radios, etc.
- > Be sure the total amount of energy used by appliances and lights plugged into the strip does not exceed that wire capacity. Overloaded cords will become hot and can start a fire.
- > Use only listed power strips that have integral overload protection and have been tested by a product laboratory such as UL or FM. This means the cord has been tested for safety.
- > Don't use appliances that have damaged cords.
- > Extension cords should not be used as a substitute for permanently wired outlets.
- > Electrical cords must be the proper wire size for the load.
- > Determine whether you will be using the cord indoors or outdoors and select one accordingly.
- > Appliance cords and extension cords are susceptible to physical damage from foot traffic, furniture, house pets, swinging doors and many other causes so protect them from damage.
- > Do not run extension cords through puddles of water as you can receive an electrical shock which can severely injure or kill you.

What's Cooking with Kitchen Fires?

The three leading factors in kitchen fires are: 1) unattended cooking, 2) Combustibles too close to cooking equipment, 3) unintentionally turned on or not turned off. 57% of people injured were trying to fight the fire themselves. 37% of the people who died were sleeping when fatally injured. Statistics show that the elderly are more likely to be burned in a kitchen fire than any other age group. So how do we reduce the number of kitchen fire incidents as well as reduce the number of deaths and injuries?

- Stay in the kitchen while cooking.
- Have a 3 foot "kids-free zone".
- Keep an oven mitt handy.
- Wear short, close fitting clothes.
- Keep things that burn away from your stovetop.
- If you have an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the oven door closed.
- If you have a pan on fire, call the fire department and use a fire extinguisher, but never use water or attempt to move the burning pan.



Pet Fire Safety



An estimated 500,000 pets are affected annually by home fires. Data shows that nearly 1,000 of those fires are accidentally started by the homeowner's pets. The following tips can be used to educate pet owners on how to prevent such home fires.

- Extinguish open flames before leaving home as pets are very curious.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen, especially if they are able to come in contact with controls on the stove.
- Protect loose wires by discouraging pets from playing with or chewing on them.
- Do not leave a glass water bowl on a wooden deck as the sun's rays filtered through the glass can create enough heat to ignite combustibles.
- When you leave home, keep young pets confined from fire starting hazards by using crates or baby gates.
- Practice escape routes with your pets. Keep collars and leashes at the ready in case you have to evacuate quickly.
- Ensure you have a working smoke alarm on each level of your home. For added protection, use smoke alarms that are interconnected and send an alarm to an off-site monitoring company.

Home Escape Planning—Your Roadmap to Safety

When your smoke alarm sounds and alerts you of a fire in your home, do you realize that you may only have two minutes to escape to safety? Are you and your family prepared to make such a rapid escape?

We teach children about home escape planning and even have them practice essential safety techniques. Unfortunately few adults are similarly prepared. Often the thinking is, "*it won't happen to me*". The reality is that if it does, practice will make a big difference in your chance of survival.

The entire family needs to know and practice two ways out of the home. Ensure that all windows will open easily. Two and three story homes should have home escape ladders available on the upper floors. Also have a central meeting point for the family; preferably in the front yard so you can meet the arriving fire units. Don't forget to call 911 from a cell phone once outside your home or a neighbors house.

Water Safety

This time of year, many individuals head to the James River to cool off and relax. Even in these times when the river appears low, dangerous deep holes are everywhere. This year the Richmond Fire Department has responded to 49 calls for service on the river. Three people have drowned and 30 people have been rescued.



Our new safety campaign, "Wear It Richmond", eludes to the fact that it is important to wear portable floatation devices (PFD) around the water. It is paramount to wear a PFD if you can not swim or you are a weak swimmer. Keep in mind that the river holds many rocks and other debris that can knock a person unconscious if they slip and fall. A PFD may just save your life if you were to strike your head. Remember, when in doubt, the best practice is to "***Wear It Richmond!***"

Operation S.A.F.E. Home—Smoke Alarms For Every Home

Almost two-thirds of reported home fire deaths occur from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. **Do you have a working smoke alarm?** The Richmond Metro Fire Departments offer free smoke alarms, batteries and installation. All you have to do is call the *Metro Richmond Fire Safety Hotline* toll-free at 1-888-537-5967 to schedule a visit from your firefighters. If you would like, we can even conduct a free home safety survey while we are there. Call today!