



# YOU CAN PREVENT FIRES

Housing fires cause **thousands of deaths** each year and **hundreds of millions of dollars** in property damage.

Many people think "it will not happen to me" but it can happen and many times with deadly consequences. **Carelessness can endanger your family, friends and neighbors.**

*Many of the leading causes of housing fires are absolutely PREVENTABLE.*

Three of the major causes of housing fires are **Unattended Cooking, Candles and Smoking Related Incidents**. The following safety tips are easy to follow and could save your life and the lives of your loved ones.

*The National Fire Protection Association recommends the following safety tips:*

## Cooking safety



- ❑ Always use cooking equipment tested and approved by a recognized testing facility.
- ❑ Never leave cooking food on the stovetop unattended, and keep a close eye on food cooking inside the oven.
- ❑ Keep cooking areas clean and clear of combustibles (e.g. potholders, towels, rags, drapes and food packaging).
- ❑ Keep children away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of three feet (1 meter) around the stove. Keep pets from underfoot so you do not trip while cooking. Also, keep pets off cooking surfaces and near by countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto burner.
- ❑ Wear short, close fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire.
- ❑ Never use a wet oven mitt, as it presents a scald danger if the moisture in the mitt is heated.
- ❑ Always keep a potholder, oven mitt and lid handy. If a small fire starts in a pan on the stove, put on an oven mitt and smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan. Turn off the burner. Don't remove the lid until it is completely cool. Never pour water on a grease fire and never discharge a fire extinguisher onto a pan fire, as it can spray or shoot burning grease around the kitchen, actually spreading the fire.
- ❑ If there is an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you and your clothing.
- ❑ If there is a microwave fire, keep the door closed and unplug the microwave. Call the fire department and make sure to have the oven serviced before you use it again. Food cooked in a microwave can be dangerously hot. Remove the lids or other coverings from microwaved food carefully to prevent steam burns.

## Candle safety



- ❑ Extinguish all candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- ❑ Keep candles at least 1 foot away from things that can catch fire, like clothing, books and curtains.
- ❑ Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily, are made from a material that cannot burn, and are large enough to collect dripping wax.
- ❑ Keep candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids.
- ❑ Keep candle wicks trimmed to one-quarter inch and extinguish taper and pillar candles when they get to within two inches of the holder. Votives and containers should be extinguished before the last half-inch of wax starts to melt.
- ❑ During power outages, avoid carrying a lit candle. Use flashlights.
- ❑ The use of candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas is strongly discouraged.

## FIRE FACTS

Between 1999 and 2002, there were 114,000 reported home fires associated with cooking equipment every year, resulting in an annual **290 deaths** and **4,380 injuries**.

During 2004, an estimated 17,200 home structure fires started by candles were reported to local fire departments. These fires resulted in an estimated **200 civilian deaths, 1,540 civilian injuries** and an estimated direct **property loss of \$200 million**.

In 2003, there were an estimated 25,600 smoking-material structure fires in the United States. These fires caused **760 civilian deaths** and **1,520 civilian injuries**.



## Smoking material-related safety

- ❑ If you smoke, smoke outside.
- ❑ Use deep, wide ashtrays on a sturdy table.
- ❑ Before you throw out butts and ashes, make sure they are out, and dousing in water or sand is the best way to do that.
- ❑ Check under furniture cushions and in other places people smoke for cigarette butts that may have fallen out of sight.
- ❑ Never smoke in a home where oxygen is being used.
- ❑ If you smoke, choose fire-safe cigarettes. They are less likely to cause fires.
- ❑ To prevent a deadly cigarette fire, you have to be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been drinking, or have taken medicine or other drugs.
- ❑ Keep matches and lighters up high, out of children's sight and reach.