

## Fires and Burns

In Washington State from 2008 to 2012, fires and burns killed 238 people (an average of 47.5 each year). Another 3,940 were hospitalized for burns and smoke inhalation (an average of 788 each year). The most at-risk are those under age 9, and adults 45 and older. Fifty-four percent of fire deaths happen in single family dwellings. Electrical problems are the leading cause of house fire deaths. Problems include misuse or poor maintenance of electrical equipment, overloaded circuits, or misuse of extension cords. Fires related to smoking and cooking are next in the number of fatalities.

### Key Messages to Help Reduce Risks

- ◆ Smoke alarms are a proven, effective, and inexpensive way to alert people to a house fire and give them time to escape. Alarms need to be maintained with fresh batteries at least twice a year or with lithium batteries that last 10 years or longer.
- ◆ People need a fire escape plan and to practice it. Everyone needs to know where to meet outside the house.
- ◆ Children tend to hide during a fire, especially if they were playing with lighters or matches. Teach them to get out of the house and not go back inside.
- ◆ Maintain heaters, furnaces, and other appliances for best efficiency and fire prevention.
  - Do not have things too close to heat sources such as wood stoves, any space heater, electric blankets, heating pads and light bulbs.
  - If furniture, curtains, stuffed animals, bedding, etc., are too close, they can smolder, catch fire, and burn.
- ◆ Attend to cooking at all times to avoid kitchen fires. If you leave the kitchen, turn off the stove or oven until you return.
- ◆ Do not wear clothes with loose sleeves when cooking – they can easily catch fire. Remember, fabrics are fire resistant - not fire proof.
- ◆ Be sure all smoking items are totally out. It is best to smoke outside and away from things that can burn.
- ◆ Keep candles away from things that can burn. Put them out when you are done. Be sure no one, including pets, knocks over a candle.
- ◆ Have a working fire extinguisher in the kitchen and other parts of the house or garage where fires can start. Know how to use it.
- ◆ When using an extension cord, be sure it is strong enough to run the current needed and will not overheat. Do not put furniture on cords that will crimp wires and cause fire.
- ◆ Set water heaters at no more than 120 degrees to prevent scald injuries.
- ◆ Be careful with hot or boiling liquids around small children and pets. They can knock over hot cups of liquid, be splashed by hot liquids, grab pots off the stove if handle is pointing out, and pull on a tablecloth which tips over items on the table.
- ◆ When cleaning ashes out of a wood stove, fireplace, or charcoal barbeque make sure ashes are completely cooled. Never put warm or hot ashes in a trash can or near the house.

## Information and Resources

- Fire prevention educator or fire marshal at your local fire department or fire district
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)
- Safe Kids Worldwide [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)
- U.S. Fire Administration [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)
- WA State Fire Marshal [www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/firemars.htm](http://www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/firemars.htm)

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