

# “Top Ten” Fire Safety Tips

By Fire Marshal Kevin Wiley

It seems that “top ten” lists are pretty common these days. You see them for movies, books, gifts lists and on late night comedy talk shows. With that thought in mind, I will present to you to my “top ten” list when it comes to fire safety tips.

1. Install and maintain smoke alarms. Smoke alarms warn you of smoke and fire in the home and can give you time to get you and your family out safely. Did you know that 65 percent of home fire deaths happen in homes with no working smoke alarms, or no smoke alarms at all?

2. Space heaters need space. Portable space heaters (or any major heat source) should be kept at least three feet away from combustibles, such as bedding, furniture, drapes or anything that can burn.

3. Matches are Tools Not Toys. We need to keep matches and lighters up out of the reach of children. Children should be taught that matches and lighters start the friendly fires around the home, such as candles, fireplaces and cooking equipment.

4. Crawl low under smoke. Inside any building, heat and smoke rise to the upper portions of the room before banking back down. The key is not to try to stand up and run, but to get down and crawl on your hands and knees toward the nearest exit.

5. Cool a burn. Any type of burn should be immediately placed under cool water for a minimum of fifteen minutes to evaluate the burn and stop the burning process. In this “cooling off” time, you can stop and think about your plan of action with a calmer head.

6. Plan and practice your escape plan. If fire breaks out in your home, many people feel they can then come up with a good plan to get everyone out safely. Sadly, this is not often the case when you are excited, scared and breathing in smoke and carbon monoxide. Have your family practice two ways out of every room in the home, choose an outside meeting place and never go back into a burning building.

7. Stop, drop and roll. Everyone should know this rule if your clothes catch on fire, as this will smother the flames out when done correctly. Practice is the key. **Stop** and **Drop** to the floor. Cover your face with your hands while you **roll** back and forth.

8. Be careful while cooking. This is the number one cause of fires in the home, so never leave cooking unattended. Keep the pot handles turned inward so children won't pull them over. If the pot or pan catches fire, slide the lid over the pan and shut off the heat to the burner.

9. Use electricity safely. Check electrical cords and appliances before using them. Replace those that are cracked or frayed, and never run cords under rugs. Choose power strips that are approved by a testing laboratory when multiple items are plugged in to one outlet.

10. Practice candle safety. The increased use of home candles has resulted in a significant increase in candle fires. Never leave lit candles unattended, and make sure they are well away from travel paths where they can be knocked over easily. Watch curtains and drapes that may blow into candles as well. Do not use candles during a power outage.

There you have my top ten list when it comes to fire safety. Take the ten tips and put them into practice in your homes and you will be safer for it.

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