

## Fire Safety – Basic Fire Prevention For Home or Office

Reducing the risk of fire is one of the more significant responsibilities that any company or individual can undertake. A fire in any home or office can spread quickly and trap, injure or kill anyone in just a few minutes. It is widely known that a fire can engulf a home in only 6 minutes! So here are a few fire-safety tips that can reduce the risk – remember, every little bit counts:

**Electricity, Outlets and Power Strips** - Be careful not to overload any electrical outlets, extension cords or power strips. When electrical circuits, the cords and the wires in the wall begin to overload they will begin to heat up. If the wires get too hot – **a fire can start!** Don't overload wall plugs power strips.

**Candles and Oil Burning Lamps** – When you light a candle or oil burning lamp you're intentionally starting a fire in your home or office. It's a fire used for enjoyment, but, it's fire none-the-less. Make sure that both are never left unattended and that children are never allowed to play with them. Also, don't burn a candle or oil burning lamp near something that can catch fire – drapes, newspaper, furniture, clothing, etc.

**Portable Space Heaters, Electric or Fueled** – Many times, heating a home or office becomes too expensive. Perhaps the buildings' heating system doesn't heat quite as well as you'd like. If you chose to supplement a heating system by using a portable heater – use the following safety tips. Like candles, make sure that portable space heaters are never left unattended and that children are never allowed to play with them. Also, don't run a space heater near something that can catch fire – drapes, newspaper, furniture, clothing, etc. Also remember that fuel-fired space heaters (kerosene, fuel-oil, propane, etc.) give off Carbon Monoxide (CO). Don't run a fuel-fired heater indoors or where there isn't a large amount of ventilation. CO is poisonous and can kill cells of the body. CO also replaces oxygen in the bloodstream, leading to suffocation.

**Combustible Storage** – Give some thought to where and how you might store combustible items. (paper, wood, clothing, rags - things that has an ignition temperature above 100° F) Store these items in areas where they are away from ignition sources. Keep these items out of electrical closets and away from gas fired equipment (boilers, hot water heaters).

**Grilling** – The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that in 1999, gas and charcoal grills caused 1,500 structure fires and 4,200 outdoor fires in or on properties. Here are some tips from the NFPA -

- Position the grill well away from siding, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas and foot traffic.
- Declare the entire grill area a "kid-free zone" until the grill has completely cooled off.
- Put out several long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames when flipping burgers.
- If you have a charcoal grill, purchase the proper starter fluid and store the can out of reach of children, and away from heat sources.
- If you have a propane grill, check the propane cylinder hose for leaks before using it. A light soap and water solution applied to the hose will quickly reveal escaping propane by releasing bubbles. Have leaking fuel lines repaired before using.
- All propane cylinders manufactured after April 2002 must have overfill protection devices (OPD). OPDs shut off the flow of propane before capacity is reached, limiting the potential for release of propane gas if the cylinder heats up. OPDs are easily identified by their triangular-shaped hand wheel.
- If you are using fluid to start a charcoal grill, use only fluid intended for this purpose. It is extremely dangerous to substitute any other combustible liquid to start the coals. This is especially true for gasoline, which can be ignited explosively by even a tiny spark.
- Apply starter fluid directly to the coals, then reseal and put away the can. Light the coals carefully, avoiding the flame flare-up. Store the can out of reach of children and away from heat sources.
- When you've finished cooking, keep an eye on the grill until it has completely cooled. Charcoal can be soaked with water to speed the cooling process, but use extreme caution to avoid the steam and splatters, which can cause burns.

