



WAYNESBORO FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE PREVENTION and LIFE SAFETY EDUCATION
E-BULLETIN

January/ February 2012

Welcome to 2012. January and February have been known to be a dangerous time for fire and injuries. It is the hope that this e bulletin will offer some helpful tips to prevent any harm.

Winter Storm Fire Safety

A wide range of natural disasters occurs within the United States every year. Natural disasters can have a devastating effect on you and your home. The U.S. Fire Administration encourages you to use the following safety tips to help protect yourself, your family, and your home from the potential threat of fire during or after a winter storm. You can greatly reduce your chances of becoming a fire casualty by being able to identify potential hazards and following the outlined safety tips.

Some Types of Fire Related Hazards Present During and After a Winter Storm

Alternative heating devices used incorrectly create fire hazards.

Damaged or downed utility lines can present a fire and life safety hazard.

Water damaged appliances and utilities can be electrically charged.

Frozen water pipes can burst and cause safety hazards.

Leaking gas lines, damaged or leaking gas propane containers and leaking vehicle gas tanks may explode or ignite.

Generators are often used during power outages. Generators that are not properly used and maintained can be very hazardous.

Gas Safety

Smell and listen for leaky gas connections. If you believe there is a gas leak, immediately leave the house and leave the door(s) open.

Before turning the gas back on, have the gas system checked by a professional.

Generator Safety

Follow the manufacturer's instructions and guidelines when using generators.

Use a generator or other fuel-powered machines outside the home. CO fumes are odorless and can quickly overwhelm you indoors.

Use the appropriate sized and type power cords to carry the electric load. Overloaded cords can overheat and cause fires.

Never run cords under rugs or carpets where heat might build up or damage to a cord may go unnoticed.

Never connect generators to another power source such as power lines. The reverse flow of electricity or 'backfeed' can electrocute an unsuspecting utility worker.

Heating Safety

Kerosene heaters may not be legal in your area and should only be used where approved by authorities.

Do not use the kitchen oven range to heat your home. In addition to being a fire hazard, it can be a source of toxic fumes.

Alternative heaters need their space. Keep anything combustible at least 3 feet away.

Make sure your alternative heaters have 'tip switches.' These 'tip switches' are designed to automatically turn off the heater in the event they tip over.

Only use the type of fuel recommended by the manufacturer and follow suggested guidelines.

Never refill a space heater while it is operating or still hot.

Refuel heaters only outdoors.

Make sure wood stoves are properly installed and at least 3 feet away from combustible materials. Ensure they have the proper floor support and adequate ventilation.

Use a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to prevent sparks from igniting nearby carpets, furniture, or other combustible items.

Remember...

Some smoke alarms may be dependent on your home's electrical service and could be inoperative during a power outage. Check to see if your smoke alarm uses a back-up battery and install a new battery at least once a year.

Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home and inside and outside of sleeping areas.

All smoke alarms should be tested monthly. All batteries should be replaced with new ones at least once a year.

If there is a fire hydrant near your home, keep it clear of debris for easy access by the fire department.

Learn About Fire Escape Plans

In the event of a fire, remember that **every second counts**, so you and your family must always be prepared. Escape plans help you get out of your home quickly. In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for a house to fill with thick black smoke and become engulfed in flames.

Prepare and practice your fire escape plan twice a year with everyone in your household, including children and people with disabilities. It's also a good idea to practice your plan with overnight guests. Some tips to consider when preparing your escape plan include:

- Draw a map of each level of your home and show all doors and windows. Find two ways to get out of each room. Make sure all doors and windows that lead outside open easily.
- Only purchase collapsible escape ladders evaluated by a recognized testing laboratory. Use the ladder only in a real emergency.
- Teach children how to escape on their own in case you cannot help them.
- Have a plan for everyone in your home who has a disability.
- Practice your fire escape plan at night and during the daytime.

Immediately Leave the Home

When a fire occurs, get out fast: you may only have seconds to escape safely.

Take the safest exit route, but if you must escape through smoke, remember to crawl low, under the smoke and keep your mouth covered. The smoke contains toxic gases, which can disorient you or, at worst, overcome you.

Never Open Doors that are Hot to the Touch

When you come to a closed door, feel the doorknob and door to make sure that fire is not on the other side. If either is hot, leave the door closed and use your secondary escape route. If the door feels cool, open it slowly. Be ready to shut it quickly if heavy smoke or fire is present.

If you can't get out, close the door and cover vents and cracks around doors to keep the smoke out. Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number. Say where you are and signal for help at the window with a light-colored cloth or a flashlight.

Designate a Meeting Place Outside and Take Attendance

Designate a meeting location a safe distance in front of your home. For example, meet under a specific tree or at the end of the driveway or front sidewalk to make sure everyone has gotten out safely and no one will be hurt looking for someone who is already safe. **Make sure everyone in your home knows how to call 9-1-1** or your local emergency number and that your house number can be seen day or night from the street.

Once Out, Stay Out

Remember to escape first and then notify the fire department using the 9-1-1 system or proper local emergency number in your area. **Never go back into a burning building for any reason.** Teach children not to hide from firefighters. If someone is missing, or pets are trapped inside your home, tell the firefighters right away. They are equipped to perform rescues safely.

How Fire-Safe Is Your Home?

You won't know until you do a fire safety walkthrough.

Conduct a fire safety walkthrough of your home on a regular basis. Use the following tips to help you in your walkthrough:

- Keep clothes, blankets, curtains, towels, and other items that can easily catch on fire at least three feet from space heaters and away from stove burners.
- Place space heaters where they will not tip over easily.
- Have chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a professional.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces and leave glass doors open while burning a fire.
- Never leave cooking unattended.
- Be sure your stove and small appliances are off before going to bed.
- Check for worn wires and do not run cords under rugs or furniture.
- Never overload electrical sockets.
- Keep lighters and matches out of the reach of children.
- Never leave cigarettes unattended and never smoke in bed.
- Make sure cigarettes and ashes are out. The cigarette needs to be completely stubbed out in the ashtray or run under water.