



## *Home*

### **MINIMIZE YOUR FIRE RISK**

Fire may be the most destructive, frightening prospect any homeowner can face. Fortunately, you can prevent most fires by following these tips, courtesy of PEMCO, the Centers for Disease Control, Underwriters Laboratories, FEMA, and the National Fire Protection Association.

- Cooking mishaps rank as the No. 1 cause of house fires in the United States.
- Never leave the stove unattended or allow towels, oven mitts, or other flammables to get too close to burners.
- Wear tight-fitting sleeves when you cook.
- Put out cooking fires with a lid or baking soda. Never pour water on grease or electrical fires.
- Malfunctioning heat sources are the second-leading cause of house fires in the United States, topped only by cooking accidents. To learn more about keeping your home and family safe, read our Tip Sheet, “How safe is your heat source?”
- Fire danger lurks in the laundry room, too. Clogged vents make clothes dryers the most likely appliance in the house to start a fire (15,500 fires nationwide each year). Screens trap only about 75% of lint, so the rest builds up in the vent. That makes the motor work harder, possibly overheating and igniting the lint. To reduce lint buildup:
  - ~ Clean out clogged lint-screen compartments.
  - ~ Check for smashed, disconnected, or ripped vent hoses.
  - ~ Replace plastic vent hoses with aluminum hoses.
  - ~ Beware of outside vent blockages, such as bird nests.
  - ~ Check for design defects and incorrectly installed hoods and screens.

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- When it comes to house fire deaths, careless smoking ranks as the leading cause nationwide. If there's a smoker in your home:
  - ~ Make sure you keep plenty of large, deep ashtrays within easy reach.
  - ~ Never allow anyone to smoke in bed.
  - ~ Keep matches and lighters where children can't reach them.
- In addition, be sure to:
  - ~ Equip your home with a fire extinguisher rated A-B-C and make sure everyone in the family knows how to use it.
  - ~ Discard cracked or broken electrical cords.
  - ~ Store gasoline, paint, and other flammable liquids outdoors in tight, labeled metal containers.

**If preventive measures fail, you'll need to rely on a good smoke detector to keep your family safe.**

Your risk of dying in a house fire drops by 50% if your home has a working smoke detector. A combination of hard-wired and battery operated smoke detectors is best. Hard-wired systems work 91% of the time, while battery models sound 75% of the time.

- Install a smoke detector outside each bedroom or sleeping area in your home.
- Test your smoke detectors once a month.
- Vacuum your detectors regularly.
- Replace the batteries at least once a year. Replace them when you reset your clocks from Standard to Daylight Time and vice-versa.