

WINTER IS PEAK HOME FIRE SEASON



by Gail Reisman

Home fires peak in December and January. The most effective way to protect yourself and your home from fire is to identify and remove fire hazards. Here's a room-by-room checklist that I found on doityourself.com.

BEDROOM

- Never smoke in bed.
- Don't use a laptop computer in bed -- it can overheat and start your blankets on fire.
- Check cords on lamps, alarm clocks and any other electrical appliance in the room.
- Dust ceiling fans regularly and use canned air to blow out the dust in the motor.
- Make sure any closet lights have a fixture cover.

FAMILY OR LIVING ROOM

- Dust all electronics often. Don't just dust the top -- use canned air again to get out the last bit of dust from inside.
- Invest in fire-resistant upholstery
- Again, check cords for dryness, brittleness, nicks or punctures.
- If you have a fireplace, make sure the chimney is cleaned at least once a year. Never leave a fire unattended, even if you have a good fire screen. Make sure all the embers are out before leaving the room.
- If you enjoy candles, don't leave them unattended, especially if you have small children or pets.
- Check the recommended wattage on lamps, and use the proper light bulbs. Keep incandescent and halogen bulbs at least 12 inches away from any lamp shades.
- Don't run any cords under carpeting.

KITCHEN

- Keep towels and hot pads away from the stove. Grease fires and flames from gas stoves can ignite anything flammable that is near the appliance.
- Don't ever leave the stove unattended.
- Make sure there is a fire/smoke alarm in the kitchen.

GARAGE, LAUNDRY ROOM AND BASEMENT

- Never store gasoline inside the house. If you have more than 5 gallons to store, use a metal cabinet.
- Paint, paint thinners and solvents are all flammable. Read the caution statements on the cans. Some items can self-combust or there can be chemical reactions if one is stored next to another. The same goes for fertilizers.
- If your garage is attached to the house, install a solid fire-safe door between the house and the garage.
- Keep your furnace clean. Change filters once a month.
- Keep rags, cardboard boxes and any other materials away from the furnace and the water heater.
- Keep access doors to the water heater closed.
- Inspect breaker wires regularly to make sure none of them is loose.
- Keep the lint trap clean on your dryer and have ridged venting installed. Never use an accordion-type dryer vent.

ATTIC

- Keep insulation, even if it is fiberglass, at least 3 inches away from any lighting fixtures.

WHOLE HOUSE

- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Don't overload outlets. There are two plugs for a reason.
- Inspect extension cords often. If they become brittle, dry or have any cuts, throw them away.
- If you use a space heater, make sure it is on a solid surface and can't tip over. Also keep it at least 3 feet away from curtains, beds and other materials.
- Install fire/smoke alarms in every room.
- Decide on an escape plan and a meeting place. Practice your escape plan often.
- Have a fire extinguishers handy in the most fire-prone areas of the house, such as the kitchen, basement and garage. Know how to use it.

This year, because of Covid 19, more of us will be 'home for the holidays'. Before you get too busy, protect yourself and your family by doing a home fire safety check. *Happy and Safe Holidays from the Lido Emergency Response Team!*