



The Houston Fire Department is a professional organization continually seeking opportunities to serve our community through fire prevention, emergency operations, patient care and excellent customer service. We are committed to be a superior emergency service organization that continually improves the quality of service delivered to our customers, the citizens of Houston.

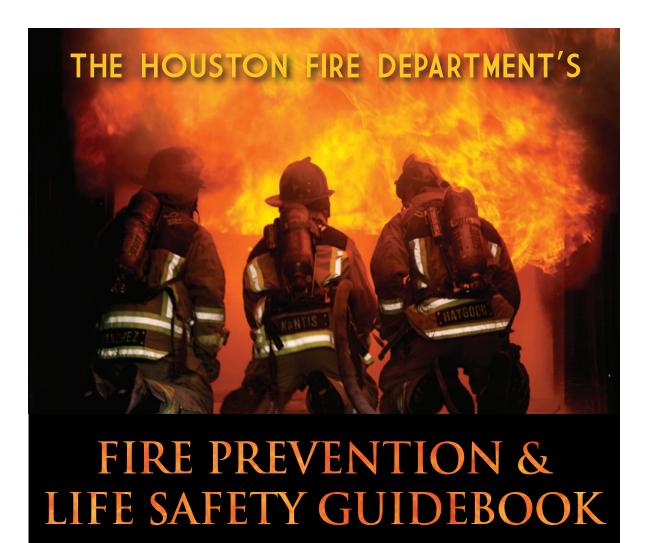




#### THE HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

600 Jefferson St. • 7th Floor • Houston, Texas 77002 832.394.6700 • www.houstonfire.org

COURAGE, COMMITMENT, COMPASSION





Produced by The Public Affairs Division of The Houston Fire Department



## FIRE PREVENTION & LIFE SAFETY GUIDEBOOK

he men and women of the Houston Fire Department respond to over 300,000 fire and emergency medical calls every year. Most of the fire incidents are easily preventable using the information contained in this guidebook. Many incidents could be avoided just by following simple maintenance procedures. A vast number of the dangerous and often fatal fires can be can be eliminated simply with slight behavioral changes or just using common sense. This guidebook was designed to address these issues and bring awareness to possible problem areas in your home.


#### **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS & WEBSITES**

#### **The Houston Fire Department**

600 Jefferson, 7th floor Houston, Texas 77002 www.houstonfire.org

Emergency Calls	9-1-1
Main Number (non emergency)	832-394-6700
Public Affairs	832-394-6633
Arson Investigation	713-247-8900
Ambulance Records	832-394-6860
Ambulance Billing	1-800-929-6209
EMS	832-394-6800
EMS & Fire Records	832-394-6860
Fire Alarm Permits	832-394-8811
Fire Prevention/Codes	832-394-6900
OIG/IAD Complaints	713-247-8960
Public Education	832-394-6741
<b>Public Information</b>	832-394-6706
Recruiting	832-394-6600
Free Smoke Detector Program	832-394-6633
Schedule a fire truck visit,	
speaker or fire station tour	832-394-6633
<b>Juvenile Firestoppers Program</b>	713-247-8826

#### **Houston Police Department**

1200 Travis Street Houston, Texas 77002 www.houstonpolice.org

Emergency Calls 9-1-1
Main Number (non emergency) 713-884-3131

#### City of Houston Office of Emergency Management

5320 North Shepherd Houston, Texas 7091-5738 www.houstonoem.net

**Main Number** 713-884-5738

#### **American Red Cross**

2700 Southwest Freeway Houston, Texas 77098 www.redcross.org/tx/houston

Main Number 713-526-8300

#### **Harris County Fire Marshal**

2318 Atascocita Humble, Texas 77396 www.hcfmo.net

Main Number 281-436-8000

#### **Centerpoint Energy**

www.centerpointenergy.com

 Report a Gas Leak
 713-659-2111

 1-888-752-8036

 Call Before You Dig
 811

 Power Outage
 713-207-2222

 1-800-332-7143

 Report Down Power Lines
 713-207-2222

#### **Child Car Seat Inspections**

Through Safe Kids of Greater Houston www.safekidsgreaterhouston.org

**Main Number** 832-828-1314

#### **Texas Poison Center Network**

www.poisoncontrol.org

National Emergency Number 1-800-222-1222

#### **Federal Emergency Management**

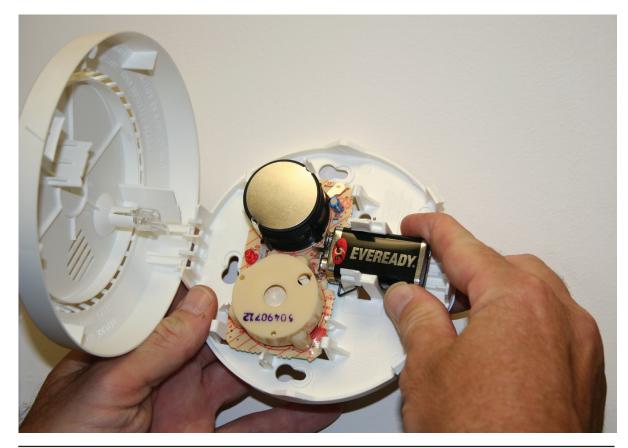
(FEMA)

www.fema.gov

Main Number 1-800-621-3362(FEMA) TTY 1-800-462-7585



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## HOME FIRE SAFETY

roper home fire safety preparation requires effort in so many different areas. However, there are two elements essential to reducing your chances of becoming a victim of catastrophic fire: working smoke detectors and a fire escape plan. In this section we will look at what you can do to prevent a fire and what to do if a one actually does occur in your home.

of fire, leaving the fruit bitter to the taste and often discolored. It is generally wise to dispose of such food.

Foods stored in glass jars subjected to heat may crack. If this occurs, discard immediately.

Do not used canned foods if the can has bulged, dented or rusted. To disinfect the exterior of a tin can or jar, wash the container in a solution of 3 tablespoons of household bleach to 1 gallon of water. Discard medicines and cosmetics if contamination is suspected.

Remember: IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

#### **American Red Cross**

When a fire occurs in your home, volunteers from the Greater Houston Area Red Cross are notified, generally by the fire department. Carefully trained to assist families in distress, these volunteers are there to take care of your emergency needs.

Every case is different because the needs of each fire victim are different. Initially, volunteers conduct a careful assessment of the victim's emergency needs. What is the condition of the home? Where can the victim stay? Did the family lose bedding, clothes, food or other essential household items?

Volunteers determine whether the house or apartment is inhabitable, or if there is a relative/friend with whom the victim can stay. If not, The Red Cross provide temporary shelter.

If needed, the Red Cross will provide vouchers to replace food, clothing and prescription medicines. Other emergency needs are evaluated. Vouchers are provided to replace the goods lost to the fire. The voucher, issued to the store of

your choice, gives the person, who has suffered a loss, a means of healing and taking control of rebuilding their lives.

All Red Cross disaster assistance is free, given as a gift from the people who support the American Red Cross. No re-payment is asked or expected.

For more information or to contact the Greater Houston Area Red Cross call (713) 526-8300.



You could also use 1/2 cup of ammonia to 2 gallons of water or finally you may try rinsing the clothing in vinegar (use rubber gloves). Always read the care label for proper instructions before cleaning any garments. It is wise to contact a professional cleaning service if you have doubts or questions.

**Leather & Suede Items**- Wipe with a damp cloth, then with a dry cloth. Stuff your purses, shoes, etc. with paper to retain shape. Leave suitcases open to air out. Leather should be dry and kept away from the heat and sun. Steel wool or a suede brush can be used on suede. We recommend that you contact leather and suede cleaners for more information. See yellow pages under "Leather".

Dishes, Pots & Pans- Wash dishes in very hot, soapy water. Rinse in hot water. Dishwashers are excellent for cleaning dishes due to the water's high temperature.

Most dishes can be soaked in a solution of 1 tablespoon of ordinary household bleach to 1 gallon of lukewarm water for 30 minutes prior to washing.

Pots and pan can be sterilized by boiling in water for at least 10 minutes. CAUTION: Some parts (handles, knobs, etc.) of the pots and pans will not withstand the high temperature involved with boiling water. Remove where practical.

**Refrigerators & Freezers-** Sometimes odors are very difficult to remove due to the dampness of the insulation, which absorbs the odors. Here are some recommendations: After one of the alternatives has been used, let the appliance air dry. Caution: Be cautious with small children when cleaning or discarding a refrigerator or freezer. Make sure the doors

are removed or secured against accidental closing.

- 1. Defrost and wash all surfaces with water and dishwashing detergent; rinse with 2 tablespoons of baking soda per 1 quart of water; re-rinse with clear water.
- 2. Wash a solution of 1 cup of vinegar to 1 gallon of water.
- 3. Wash with a solution of 1 cup of household ammonia

#### **Safe Food Practices**

What to do When the Freezer Stops- A full freezer will stay cold many hours longer than a freezer that is only a quarter full. A freezer full of meat will not warm up as quickly as a freezer full of baked goods. The colder the food, the longer it will stay frozen. A well-insulated freezer will remain frozen longer than one with little insulation. If dry ice is placed in the freezer soon after the power is shut off, the temperature will stay below freezing. Look in the yellow pages of the telephone book under "ice" or "dry ice".

The entire contents of the freezer should be moved to a commercial freezer firm or a friend's freezer.

#### **Food Management**

Partial thawing and refreezing will reduce the quality of foods particularly fruits, vegetables and prepared foods. It is considered a safe practice to re-freeze foods that have partially thawe d if the foods still contain visible ice crystals. Do not eat ice cream or ice milk after the product has melted.

Meat products are unsafe to eat when they begin to spoil. If the color or odor of the thawed product is questionable, discard it. Bacteria multiply very rapidly in thawed or non-refrigerated foods designed for controlled conditions.

Fruits usually ferment as they begin to spoil and generally will absorb smoke or other by-products

#### **SMOKE DETECTORS**

#### **Working Smoke Detector Save Lives.**

**■** ome Fire Safety begins with a working smoke detector. A smoke detector is probably the most important safety device you can have in your home. However, based upon 2010-2011 Houston Fire Department estimates, 30 percent of all Houston area homes have no smoke detectors or have ones that do not work. Nationwide. annual estimates indicate that up to 75% of residential fire fatalities occur in homes without working smoke detectors. That percentage can be greatly reduced because smoke detectors are inexpensive, easy to install and maintain and can mean the difference between life and death.

Through the "Get Alarmed! Houston" smoke detector program, the Houston Fire Department provides free smoke detectors to Houston area homeowners who are at the highest risk for firelow income, the disabled and the elderly. This program, founded in 2001, is entirely funded by private and corporate donations. The members of the Houston Fire Department distribute and install 3,000-4,000 smoke detectors a year by individual appointments and special events. If you or someone you know needs a smoke detector, please call the Houston Fire Department Public Affairs Office at 832-394-6633.

#### **Smoke Detector Types:**

- 1. Ionization-Works faster in a flaming fire
- 2. Photoelectric- Works faster in a smoldering fire
- 3. Dual Sensor- Works fast in either type of fire

#### **Maintenance:**

- Change the battery in the Spring and Fall when you change your clock
- Test the detector every month

- Vacuum the vents of the detector at least once a year
- Always follow manufacturers instructions
- The National Fire Protection Association recommends replacing your smoke detector every 10 years

#### Where to install your smoke detector:

- In a hallway that connects your bedrooms find the center point
- Place at least one detector on each level (minimum of 1 outside each sleeping area)
- Wall Mount- place 4-12 inches from ceiling



- Ceiling Mount- place at least 4 inches from anv wall
- High Pitch Ceilingsplace 3 feet from highest point
- DO NOT place your detector in the kitchen or near an air conditioning vent.





#### HAVING A FIRE ESCAPE PLAN Planning, Preparation And Practice Make All The Difference.

Smoke detectors are the essential elements in any home safety program but would your family know what to do if one them actually sounds an alarm? Preparing and practicing a family fire escape plan is another crucial part of home fire defense. Every member of your family, if possible, needs to be involved in preparation and practicing your family fire escape plan. Once you have designed a plan, practice your plan once a month with every member of your family.

#### **Designing Your Own Escape Plan**

- Have a designated meeting place outside your home so you will know everyone got out safely
- Make sure every member of your family knows two-ways out of each room and the home
- Teach you children how to dial 9-1-1 and make sure they know their home address and phone number

- Talk to your neighbors. You may have to go to their home to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.
- If you have a two-story home, purchase fire escape ladders for each bedroom on the top floor
- Make sure your address is visible from the street at all times. Critical seconds can be lost if emergency crews miss your address. Remove branches or bushes if necessary. If you live in an apartment, have the management replace or repaint any street or building numbers if needed.
- Check your smoke detector every month
- Practice your escape plan every month

On page 27 of this guidebook, draw diagrams of your home and every room in your home. Indicate on each drawing, the two ways out of that room. Also indicate the designated meeting place outside of your home. Continually review these plans with your family.

### **CALLING 9-1-1:**When Time Means Everything.

When an emergency arises, whether it is a fire or medical emergency, every second counts. If you follow these simple tips, your emergency responders will have the necessary information they will need to reach you quickly.

#### 1. Remember 9-1-1 is for EMERGENCIES ONLY!

2. When calling 9-1-1, remain calm, speak clearly, and give the operator the following information: Your name, your phone number, cell number, address of the emergency and as much about the emergency as possible.

3. **If you call from your cell phone**- If you are in a car, stop the car when you are calling. Remain calm, speak clearly and give the operator the following information: Your name, your cell phone number in case you get disconnected they will be able to reach you and clearly describe any vehicles and individuals involved and give as much information about the emergency as possible.

4. Operators cannot automatically identify your location so give as much information about the location of the emergency as possible (landmarks, streets, city, etc).

#### **Cleaning Tips**

Locks & Hinges- Locks (especially iron locks) should be taken apart, wiped with kerosene and oiled. If locks cannot be removed, squirt machine oil through a bolt opening and work the knob to distribute the oil. Hinges should also be thoroughly cleaned and oiled.

Walls, Floors & Furniture- To remove soot and smoke from walls, furniture and floors, mix together 4-6 tbsp. of tri-sodium phosphate, 1 cup of Lysol or other chloride bleach and 1 gallon of warm water. Wear gloves when cleaning. After washing article, rinse with clear warm water and dry thoroughly.

Walls may be washed down while wet. Use mild soap or detergent. Wash a small area at one time, working from the floor up. Then rinse the wall with clear water immediately. Ceiling should be washed last.

Do not repaint until walls and ceilings are completely dry- Your wallpaper can also be repaired. Use a commercial paste to re-paste loose edges or sections. Contact wallpaper dealers or installers for more information on wallpaper cleaners. Washable wallpaper can be washed like an ordinary wall, but care must be taken not to soak the paper. Work from the bottom to top to prevent streaking.

Wood Furniture- Do not dry your furniture in direct sunlight. The wood will warp and twist out of shape. Clear off mud and dirt. Remove drawers. Let them dry thoroughly so there will be no sticking when you replace them. Scrub wood furniture or fixtures with a stiff brush and a cleaning solution. Wet wood can decay and mold, so dry completely. Open doors and windows for good ventilation. Turn on your furnace or air conditioner if necessary. If mold forms wipe the wood surface with a cloth soaked in a mixture of borax

and hot water. To remove white spots or film, rub the wood surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of 1/2 cup of household ammonia and 1/2 cup of water. Then wipe the surface dry and polish with wax.

Wall-To-Wall Carpet and Rugs- A wet/dry vacuum or water extractor carpet cleaning machine is excellent for removing standing water and dirt. These can be rented at most supermarkets or drugstores. Add carpet cleaning detergent and clean the carpet as instructed on the machine. Allow the carpet to dry out thoroughly before sweeping or vacuuming.

Rugs should also be allowed to dry thoroughly. Throw rugs can be cleaned by beating, sweeping or vacuuming and then shampooing. Rugs should be dried as quickly as possible- lay them flat and expose them to a circulation of warm, dry air. A fan turned on the rugs will speed drying. Make sure the rugs are dry. Even though the surface seems dry, moisture remaining at the base of the tufts can quickly rot a rug. For information on cleaning and preserving carpets, contact any of the carpet cleaning firms listed in the yellow pages of your telephone book.

Combating Smoke Odors- Removing smoke odors can be very difficult because of the many combinations of materials on the market. Some examples are raw materials such as natural fibers (i.e. cotton, linen, silk, wool, fur fiber, etc.) and man-made fibers (acetate, acrylic, nylon, rayon, polyester, vinyls, etc.) For best results, check the yellow pages for a local cleaning firm.

Clothing with Soot- Clothing that can withstand bleaching can often be cleaned by washing in one of the following mixture:

Add 4 tablespoons of tri-sodium phosphate and

1 cup of Lysol to 1 gallon of water. Wash, then rinse with clear water and let dry thoroughly.

7

Depreciation is the formal term used to express the amount of value an item loses over a period of time.

Value After the Fire: This is sometimes called the item's "salvage value". Those individuals who have experienced fire or other disaster may obtain assistance from the local American Red Cross.

After applying to the Red Cross, you can obtain food, clothing, lodging and other services. A Red Cross disaster caseworker will assist you day or night. Your disaster caseworker can help contact the appropriate agencies.

#### **Gathering Important Documents**

Documents important to your well-being may be damaged or destroyed as a result of a fire. Locating these documents will speed up the process of recovering from a fire. Below is a list of documents that should be located if possible:

**Credit Cards Animal Registration Social Security Cards** Marriage Papers Automobile Title **Death Certificates** Medical Records Stock and Bonds Bank Books Divorce Decree Medicare/Medicaid Title to Deeds **Birth Certificates** Driver's License Warranties **Passports Burial Contracts Income Tax Records** Wills Payment Books

Insurance Policies

Senior Citizen ID Cards

Citizenship Papers

#### **Change of Address**

If you move, notify the following agencies:

Banks
Phone Company
Department of Public Safety (driver's license)
Publications (newspapers, magazines, etc.)
Your Children's School

Utility Customer Service
Credit Card Companies
Social Security Administration (if necessary)
Doctor's Office and your pharmacy
U.S. Postal Service

#### **Caring For Damaged Documents**

Important documents may be salvaged if you quick-freeze them immediately. Lift off each page as they thaw and copy. Contact any of the meat cutting firms located in the yellow pages and look for quick-freeze services.

Public assistance clients should notify the Department of Human Services office in their area if their ID card is damaged or destroyed. This will help eliminate problems if the need arises for check cashing, medical aid, or food assistance programs. Call (888)456-2770.

#### **Replacing Damaged Money**

To reclaim paper money or coins, check with any local commercial bank or contact the following. Be sure to include name(s) and address(es) on bonds, appropriate date or time period when purchased, denominations and appropriate number of each.

#### **Savings Bonds**

**Bureau of Public Debt** 

P.O. Box 7012

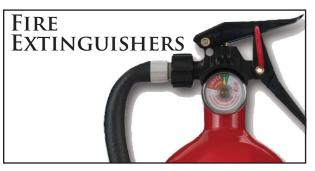
Parkersburg, WV 26106-7012

visit: www.treasurydirect.gov for more information and to download the proper documents

#### Money

#### **Department of the Treasury**

Bureau of Engraving and Printing Office of Currency Standards P.O. Box 37048 Washington, DC 20013 1-866-575-2361 or 202-874-8897



As part of a complete home fire safety program, in addition to smoke detectors, the Houston Fire Department also recommends installing fire extinguishers throughout your home.

## Placement of Fire Extinguishers Fire Extinguishers must be:

- Readily visible
- Uniformly distributed (throughout the structure)
- Free from blockage by storage and equipment
- Near normal ports of travel
- Protected from potential accidental or malicious damage
- An extinguisher weighing less than 40 lbs. should be installed with the top not more than 5 feet from the floor

#### **Extinguishers Have Their Limits**

A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives. However, they are not designed to fight large or spreading fires. Even against small fires, they are useful only under the right conditions:

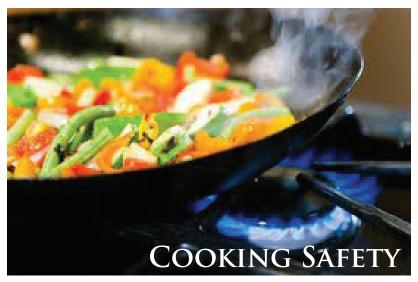
- An extinguisher must be the right type (see below) for the fire
- An extinguisher must be large enough for the fire at hand. It must be readily available, in working order and fully charged
- The operator must know how to use the extinguisher quickly
- The operator must be strong enough to lift and operate the extinguisher

#### Remember to: P. A. S. S.

- P. Pull the Pin
- **A.** Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire
- **S.** Squeeze the handle while standing 8 feet away
- **S.** Sweep the nozzle back and forth at the base of the fire

#### **Your Extinguisher Must Fit The Fire**

- TYPE A- Ordinary combustibles (wood, cloth, rubber, many plastics, etc.)
- **TYPE B** Flammable liquids (gasoline and other flammable liquids, oil, grease, tar, oilbased paint, lacquer and flammable gas)
- TYPE C- Electrical equipment (energized electrical equipment including wiring, fuse boxes, circuit breakers, machinery & appliances)
- TYPE D- Metal fires
- TYPE K- (For use ONLY where cooking equipment involves the use of animal or vegetable oils





#### It Is Always Better To Prevent A Fire Than To Deal With One

Cooking has long been the leading cause of home structure fires and civilian home fire injuries. According to National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) nationwide estimates, two out of every five reported home fires and thirty seven percent of fire related injuries involved cooking. Cooking fire incidents also account for an annual average of 400 fire fatalities and almost \$800 million in damages.

The following information was collected to inform you on the dangers of unsafe cooking practices and environments. Use this information to recognize and correct any unsafe cooking habits you may use on a daily basis.

In The Kitchen- Careless cooking is the #1 cause of residential fires and unattended cooking is the primary cause of kitchen fires!

- NEVER leave cooking food unattended!
- Turn pot handles away from the front of the stove and never position them over another burner

- Make sure pot holders are not too close to the stove
- Wear short sleeves or tight-fitting long sleeves
- Shield yourself from scalding steam when lifting lids from hot pots
- Keep broilers, ovens, stove tops and exhaust ducts free from grease



- If there is a fire in the oven-Turn off the oven and keep the oven door closed
- Use an ABC fire extinguisher, baking soda or a tight-fitting pot lid, **NEVER** flour or water, to extinguish a kitchen fire

- Electricity- Contact a professional, licensed electrician. Approval from a certified electrician is required before the utility companies can reconnect the power.
- Water- You can turn this back on yourself. Use caution because the the fire may have damaged the plumbing. Water damage may occur when the pipes are again filled with water. Contact Utility Customer Service at (713)837-0600 for more information.
- Natural Gas- Do not turn the gas back on. a Reliant Energy/Entex service person is available to turn the gas on and relight your appliances. Call (713)659-2111 to reach a Reliant Energy/Entex representative.
- **Telephone** Contact your telephone company business office.

**Note:** Remember not to operate wet or damp appliances. Have a service person check them first.

**ELECTRICITY AND WATER DO NOT MIX!** 

#### If You Cannot Live In Your Home

f your home is severely damaged or contaminated, we recommend caution in planning to reoccupy the residence.

If the building is structurally damaged to the point that is uninhabitable, a building inspector must be called. After the building inspection has been completed, a permit must be obtained before making repairs. If you are covered by a homeowner's insurance policy, you may be eligible for alternative temporary housing. Check your policy or with your agent.

Remember, save all receipts for any expenses incurred during fire loss. Your insurance company will want copies to reimburse you. These receipts will also be useful for verifying losses claimed on your federal income tax. All items in the home should be inventoried and no item

should be thrown away without the approval of the insurance company.

#### **Property & Income Tax Adjustments**

Information and applications can be obtained from the Harris County Tax Assessor's Office by calling (713)224-1919. Ask for the Taxpayer's Claim for Reduction of Assessments on Destroyed Property. Return completed forms to the Assessor's Office. Be sure to meet the appropriate deadlines.

Uninsured loss of property, both real and personal, may entitle you to deductions on your income tax. Information is available from the area office of the Internal Revenue Service. Call (800)829-1040.

You will encounter different viewpoints on the value of your property in adjusting your fire loss or in claiming a casualty loss on your federal income tax. Knowing the following terms will help you understand the process used to determine the value of your fire loss:

Your Personal Valuation: Your personal loss of goods through fire may be difficult to measure. These personal items have sentimental value to you, however, objective measures of value are what you, the insurer, and the I.R.S. will use as a common ground for discussion.

**Cost When Purchased:** This is an important element in establishing an item's final value. Receipts will help verify the cost price.

Fair Market Value Before the Fire: This concept is also expressed as "actual cash value". This is what you could have received for the item if you sold it the day before the fire. The price would reflect its cost at purchase minus the wear it had sustained since purchase.



If your home is insured, give notice of the damage immediately. You can do this by contacting your insurance agent. Once in contact with your agent, ask them to meet you immediately at the site of your fire and if possible, arrange a meeting with a claims adjuster as well. Ask your agent to bring a copy of your policy and be sure to confirm in detail the content of your policy coverage.

Some insurance companies may require the policyholder to make an inventory of damaged personal property showing, in detail, the quantity, description and how much was paid for the items.

Another important item on your to-do list is to file a claim in writing with your insurance company. This must be done within 60 to 90 days of the fire. Check with your insurance company regarding any deadlines.

This general statement should include the date, time and cause of the loss. Other important items that are helpful to include in this general statement are the names and addresses of anyone who has a legal interest in your property such as mortgage/lienholders and completed inventory as specified by your insurance company.

After your claim is approved, your insurance company may pay in several ways. Once you have submitted your formal statement of loss, the insurance company generally has up to 60 days to pay the claim. Depending on your coverage, some portions of your payment may be delayed.

#### Not Insured?

If you do not have fire insurance, recovering from your losses will depend on your own resources and help from your community. These organizations keep up to date on current services available and can put you in touch with service agencies in your community. Here is where you can look for help:

- Your church or synagogue
- Local service organizations like the Lions Club or Rotary Club
- Relief organizations like the American Red Cross or Salvation Army
- Local and state governments which have emergency service offices or social services

Your fire losses are deductible from your federal income tax. Remember to save all of your receipts and keep records of what you spend to repair and replace your fire-damaged property and any costs incurred from living expenses while you are recovering from the fire. These records should be used for calculating your casualty loss on your income tax form.

If your loss is uncompensated by insurance, you may be entitled to a tax deduction. Federal guidelines are available in Publication 547, Tax Information on Disasters, Casualty Losses and Theft. Contact the I.R.S. at (800)829-1040.

#### **Re-Establishing Utilities**

After the building inspection is completed, a permit must be obtained prior to making repairs. The Houston Fire Department often will have the utility services shut off or disconnected as a safety precaution to prevent further damage to the structure and its contents.

The procedures for re-establishing the utility services are as follows:



#### **Barbeque Pits:**

- When starting your barbeque use charcoal lighter fluid. **NEVER** Gasoline!
- Have a fire extinguisher or charged garden hose near while the fire is burning
- Use long handle barbeque tools when grilling outdoors
- Check the pit frequently and use barbeque pits outdoors only
- Soak the coals in water before disposing of them
- The Houston Fire codes prohibits the use of barbeque pits within 10 feet of roofs, combustible walls and other combustible materials. Fines start at \$250.00 for violations

#### **Gas Grills:**

- Check your gas connections and tank regularly. Use a light soap & water solution to check for leaks.
- Make sure there are no clogged lines or burners
- ALWAYS have the grill open when starting the fire. The accumulation of gas can explode when exposed to flame
- If the fire does not ignite when you press the ignitor button, turn off the gas and let the remaining gas clear before restarting
- When you are finished cooking, turn off the gas at the tank and the controls
- **NEVER** store gas cylinders in your home or garage. **ALWAYS** store them outside.
- ALWAYS use gas grills outdoors

#### **Turkey Fryers:**

- Turkey fryers are **EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!**
- ALWAYS use turkey fryers outdoors away from anything that can burn
- **NEVER** use them on wooden decks or in garages
- **NEVER** leave the fryer unattended or let children or pets near the fryer
- The oil will remain dangerously hot hours after use
- **NEVER** overfill a fryer and make sure the turkey is completely thawed
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby. **NEVER** use water to extinguish the fire.

#### You Will Need:

- In addition to a completely thawed turkey, you'll need a 40 or 60 quart pot with basket or turkey frying hardware, plus a propane gas tank and burner, a candy/deep fry thermometer, a meat thermometer and lots of oil. Use oils that have a high smoke point, such as corn, peanut or canola oils.
- As far as the turkey itself goes, smaller birds work better for frying. Try not to go over 15 lbs.

**Before You Fry-** Please read and follow all manufacturers instructions.

#### These tips will help to prevent oil overflow

• Before beginning, (and before you even season or marinate your turkey) determine the amount of oil you'll need by placing the turkey in the basket (or on the hanger, depending on the type of fryer you are using) and putting it in the pot. Add water until it reaches about two inches above the turkey. Remove the turkey and note the water level by using a ruler to measure the distance from the top of the pot to the surface of the water. Remove the water and thoroughly dry the pot. Now add enough oil to equal what the water level was without the turkey in the pot.





#### **Give Space Heaters Their Space!**

Unsafe home heating is a leading cause of home fires second only to cooking. According to statistics available from the National Fire Protection Association, residential fires involving home heating equipment account for 18 percent of all reported home fires, 22 percent of residential fire deaths and 13 percent of home civilian injuries. Space heaters alone account for one third of all reported home heating fires. The following tips should help keep you safe and warm during our coldest months.

- Give Space Heaters their space- Keep them at least **3 feet** away from combustibles-walls, sofas and anything else that will burn
- Space heaters should ALWAYS be placed on the floor
- **NEVER** leave children alone in a room with a space heater and do not let children adjust the controls or move the heater
- Open-faced heaters should have a proper screen and grates in place-NEVER operate a defective heater

- Provide adequate ventilation when using a gas space heater, opening a window slightly (one inch) to prevent carbon monoxide buildup
- **NEVER** overload outlets or breakers
- **NEVER** hide cords under rugs or carpets. Placing anything on top of the cord could cause it to overheat and can cause a fire
- **NEVER** use an extension cord with the heater. If the cord is hot to the touch, turn off the heater and unplug it!
- Electric heaters permanently installed in the wall or ceiling should have lint and dust removed regularly. Lint and dust will burn!
- Have your heating system professionally inspected and serviced every year
- Purchase a carbon monoxide detector if you use gas or a fireplace for your heating
- Install a Carbon Monoxide detector in the hallway near every separate sleeping area of the home
- If you use a gas space heater, light the match before you turn on the gas. This avoids the risk of flashback caused by accumulating gas

A fire can be one of the most tragic events in your life. Often when a fire strikes, the hardest part is knowing where to begin the recovery process of your home.

We have gathered the following information to assist you in this time of need. We want to help reduce your fire losses. If you cannot find the help you need, call the Houston Fire Department at 832-394-6700 and we will make every effort to assist you in locating the appropriate individual or agency who can help.

#### **Protecting Yourself and Your Family**

We know you are anxious to inspect the damage and, if possible, begin salvaging your belongings. Our primary responsibility is to protect you from possible injury and to provide for your safety. So please be aware of the unseen hazards present such as structural damage, damaged utilities, toxic hazards or airborne contaminants.

Babies and small children, the elderly, pregnant women, individuals with respiratory diseases (asthma, emphysema etc.) may be especially sensitive to contaminants and/or sooty deposits which may be present after the fire.

Exposure to toxic gases produced in fires as well as certain particles, such as asbestos fibers used in some building materials, have been shown to increase the risk of certain types of cancer.

In most cases, it is both safer and quicker to let your insurance agency handle the necessary cleanup and renovation of your property. They can schedule the needed repairs with skilled professionals who are specialists in fire and water damage repairs. These professionals know the possible hazards and have the equipment necessary to deal with them.

# The First 2 4:00 Hours

After the fire is out, certain firefighting and rescue techniques may appear unnecessary. However, lives could be lost and buildings could suffer total destruction without these methods.

Since fires produce temperatures over 1200 degrees Fahrenheit, ventilation of the building is necessary to eliminate heat, smoke and hot gases. This must be done quickly so firefighters can enter the structure to extinguish the fire and rescue any occupants. Walls are also forced open to search for hidden fires which must be done to ensure complete fire extinguishment.

- Contact your insurance agent as soon as possible. Your agent will be able to help you arrange for immediate repairs. If you cannot reach your agent or have no insurance, you may wish to obtain professional assistance. Fire and water damage restoration firms are listed in the yellow pages.
- After Fire Department personnel leave, the building becomes your responsibility. If possible, the firefighters may secure doors and windows against unauthorized entry. The final responsibility does, however, lie with the owner.
- If you are a tenant however, contact the resident manager, the owner or the owner's insurance agent. It is the owner's responsibility to prevent further loss to the building. People across the greater Houston community know they can rely on the American Red Cross in times of crisis. Our pledge to the American public is that "We'll Be There".



## AFTER THE FIRE

Ithough the tips in this guidebook are designed to prevent fires from occurring, sometimes bad things just happen. What you do **after** a tragedy strikes you and your family can have a great impact on your recovery time and stress level caused by the event. The information contained on the next few pages will help guide you through the difficult process of recovering from a fire in your home.



Everyone loves a fire in the fireplace. However, if you heat your home with your fireplace, please burn safely.

- Clear the area around the fireplace and chimney. Debris too close to the fireplace could cause a fire. Check the flue for obstructions like bird nests. Trim any overhanging branches or large trees near the chimney, to give a minimum of 10' distance from the chimney.
- **ALWAYS** use a fireplace screen. Use a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to prevent sparks igniting nearby carpets or furniture.
- **NEVER** overload the fireplace with too many logs. Don't use the fireplace as an incinerator, and never burn garbage, Christmas trees, or piles of paper.
- Keep a fire extinguisher on hand. See that the extinguisher is in good working order and that all family members know how to operate it.
- Provide Smoke Detectors. Place smoke detectors throughout the house. Test the smoke detectors and batteries regularly.
- Place logs at the rear of the fireplace when building a fire, preferably on a grate.
- **NEVER** leave fire unattended! Be sure the fire is extinguished before you go to bed.
- Have your fireplace inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney sweep. A dirty fireplace can cause chimney fires or contribute to air pollution.
- Choose the right fuel. In general, hardwood firewood (oak, hickory, ash, etc.) burns cleaner than softwood firewood (fir, pine, cedar, etc.). Independent tests have proven that manufactured firelogs burn much cleaner than firewood.

- Use seasoned wood. Wood with a moisture content of less than 20 percent burns much cleaner than green (high moisture content) wood.
- BURN SMART! Good fireplace habits can decrease fuel consumption in the home while maintaining the same level of warmth. Make sure the fire gets enough air to burn properly. Close the damper when the fire is out to keep warm room air inside.
- Minimize creosote buildup. A buildup of creosote is a main cause of chimney fires. Creosote is the black tarry or flaky substance formed in chimneys during the wood burning process. While firewood leaves flammable creosote and carbon deposits on chimney wells, tests show firelogs leave significantly less creosote accumulation than wood.
- Make a fire that fits your fireplace. A fire that's too large or too hot not only wastes fuel, it can crack your chimney.
- Keep your fireplace in good working condition. If you notice any cracks in the chimney, and any loose mortar or brick, have your chimney repaired. Have the chimney liner inspected for cracking or deterioration.
- Read and follow the label when using firelogs. Use one firelog at a time, starting it with a fireplace at room temperature. Firelogs perform best when burned on a supporting fireplace grate with a maximum of three to four inches of space between support bars.
- Dispose of hot ashes in covered metal containers, placed outside in a non-combustible area (i.e. free from leaves, combustible overhangs, etc.)
- For wood stoves, make sure the stoves are properly installed, away from combustible surfaces, and have the proper floor support and ventilation. **NEVER** use flammable liquids (such as gasoline) to start or accelerate a fire.



n recent years, fire pits have become one of the most popular outdoor home enhancements available. Fire pits allow for a warm gathering place outside on cool evenings-a place where family and friends can get together to enjoy the outdoors all year around.

Fire pits can be part of an elaborate outdoor kitchen area, or a simple, portable unit that can be placed on any patio. But whatever fire pit type you are using, remember that they all have one element in common-**fire**.

Following these guidelines will help prevent a firerelated disaster and allow you to safely enjoy your fire pit and the great outdoors.

#### **Before You Light The Flame:**

- **NEVER** use chemicals such as lighter fluid or gel fuel to start your fire. Use a natural starter fuel such as a fatwood stick to light your fire. Fatwood is an all-natural product that light with a single match, even when wet.
- Position the pit safely at least 10 feet away from structures and flammable items
- Place the pit on solid ground in an open area avoiding overhanging trees and roof lines
- Have an extinguisher or charged hose or bucket of sand nearby in case you have to quickly extinguish the fire

- Start with a small fire with minimal fuel
- Select the wood carefully to minimize smoke. Harder woods such as oak or hickory produce less smoke than unseasoned or soft woods
- Most fire pits come with screens so use them. Once the fire has died down, place the mesh screen on the pit to control the sparks and capture the burning debris
- Stay three feet away from the heat. Establish a three foot "kid-free area" and teach your children the rules about the pit.
- Use safety gloves and stainless steel tools when lifting the screen or shifting the wood
- **NEVER** leave the fire unattended especially if children or pets are present
- Throwing water in a fire pit may not be enough to extinguish the flame completely. To be safe, let coals cool and gently pour water over them. Make sure the embers are completely extinguished before going indoors



Candles provide a warm and inviting glow to any room. Most people don't see candles as a major fire hazard, but according to the NFPA from 2005-2009 candles accounted for 12,860 fires (3% of reported home fires), 136 deaths (5% of home fire deaths), 1,041 injuries (8% of home fire injuries) and an estimated \$471 million in property damage. According to the National Candle Association, 70% of households in the United States use candles.

Kitchen Issues:	Yes	No
Never leaves food cooking unattended?		
Range top and oven are clean of grease and debris?		
There are no rags or other flammable materials near the stove top?		
Always turn pot handles away from stove but never over the other		
Pot handles properly positioned while cooking?		
Barbeque grills in use?		
Grills always used outside?		
Grills are watched at all times when in use?		
Have the gas lines been checked for leaks?		
Smoking Issues:	Yes	No
Do you smoke?		
Do you smoke in bed?		
Ashtrays cleaned regularly?		
Storage Issues:	Yes	No
Flammable materials stored properly (awany open flame source, out of the reach of children, etc)?	ay from	
Are flammable materials stored too close to the water heater?		
Are matches and lighters stored out of children's reach?		
Is propane for the gas grill being properly stored outside?		
Other Fire Safety Issues:	Yes	No
Is your home clean of excessive trash and debris that may catch fire?		
Fireplace used to heat home?	Ш	

Other Fire Safety Issues:	Yes	No		
Date of last chimney cleaning:				
Having your air conditioning and heating system checked annually can also reduce your chance of experiencing an electrical fire.				
Date of last heating/AC inspection:				
If your lights flicker and dim or yo tripping, you my be overloading you have too many electrical devi one outlet with the protection of a sor, you stand a greater risk of a Outlets overloaded?	your out ces plug a surge s	tlets. If ged into suppres-		
Lights flicker or breakers trip easily?	Ш	Ш		
Burglar Bars present?				
Type:				
Fixed Locking Quick	Release			
If locking, is the key located near the bars for quick escape?  Location of key:				
Even dryer lint can catch fire causing major damage and death. It is recommended to clean your lint filter after every load.				
Do you clean your lint filter regularly?  After each load  After every other load  Once in a while  Rarely ever				
Ralely evel				

## HOME FIRE SAFETY VLIST

The best way to survive a fire is to prevent one from ever happening. The Houston Fire Department invites you to use this Home Fire Safety Check List as a tool to identify and correct potential trouble spots in your home. Sometimes these trouble spots can be found in behaviors that you or a loved one regularly practice but are unaware of the risks involved. Smoking in bed or unsafe cooking habits are just two types of behaviors that contribute greatly to home fires and fire fatalities. Please use this check list as a guide as you walk through your home to help you recognize and correct your potential fire problem areas.

and correct your potential fire problem areas.			
Fire Safety Equipment:	Yes	No	
Smoke Detector(s) in home?			
How Many?			
Smoke detectors working?			
Date of last test:			
Date of last battery change:			
Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors?			
CO detectors working?			
Date of last test:			
Date of last battery change:			
1			

Fire extinguisher present?

Ī	Fire extinguisher fully charged?				
	Date of last extinguisher inspection:				
	Proper type of fire extinguisher?				
	Possible Dangers:	Yes	No		
	Space heater(s) present?				
	Space heaters(s) used properly? (3 ft. away from flammable curtains, p floor, no extension cords)	apers. Pl	aced on		
	Condition of space heater(s):				
	Good Poor Replac	e			
Extension cords are NEVER to be used with space heaters! Extension cords can easily overheat and cause a fire!					
	Candles present?				
	Candles being used properly (proper not left burning etc.)?	candle ho	olders,		
Unsafe cooking practices and smoking in bed are two of the most common causes of residential fires and fire fatalities. National statistics show that the majority of household fires begin in the kitchen and the majority of those fires are caused by poor cooking habits. Most fire that begin in the bedroom are caused by smoking in bed. People fall asleep in bed while smoking and set their bed on fire.					
	Kitchen Issues:	Yes	No		
	Is the stove/oven being used to heat the house?				

#### **Here Are Some More Eye-Opening Facts:**

- 40% of all home candle fires start in the bedroom and account for 30% of the deaths
- **50%** of candle fires occur when combustible materials are left near a burning candle
- Falling asleep while a candle is burning accounts for 12% of candle fires and 25% of related deaths

## Candles Can Be Used Safely If You Follow These Tips:

- Use candles only with constant adult supervision
- **NEVER** leave a candle burning!

#### WHEN YOU GO OUT...BLOW OUT!

- Keep candles away from items that can catch fire, such as Christmas trees, clothing, paper or curtains
- Place candles and candle holders on a secure piece of furniture.
- Make sure candle holders are non-combustible and large enough to collect the dripping wax.
- NEVER place candles in windows where blinds or curtains can close over them
- Keep wicks trimmed to 1/4 inch and extinguish candles when they burn to within 2 inches of the holder
- Keep candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids
- **NEVER** use candles in places where they can be knocked over by children or pets



**B**efore heating your home, using the fireplace or even cooking your dinner, you must be aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that can kill you before you are even aware it is in your house. CO is produced during the incomplete combustion of fuels such as natural gas, oil, wood, kerosene and coal. Be aware of the symptoms of CO poisoning and what you can do to avoid it.

- CO causes side effects such as headaches, nausea, dizziness, disorientation and fatigue that are often mistaken for the flu. These effects can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and length of exposure.
- CO kills hundreds and injures thousands of people each year.
- The gas may originate from your furnace, fireplace, stove, hot water heater, bbq grill or car.
- The danger increases more during the winter months as heaters are used more frequently and fresh air ventilation is minimized by closed windows.
- Warming up automobiles in an attached garage, even with the garage door open, can allow concentrated amounts of CO to enter your house through nearby windows or carport door.
- When inhaled, carbon monoxide is absorbed into the bloodstream 200 times as fast as oxygen.
- Purchase a Carbon Monoxide detector if you use gas or a fireplace for your heating. Have your furnace professionally inspected every year and checked for CO emissions.
- Install a Carbon Monoxide detector in the hallway near every separate sleeping area of the home.
- When your CO alarm sounds, ventilate the house with fresh air by opening windows and doors.
- Check your CO detector by every month pressing the test button and replace the detector every 5 years.





The holidays are a time of celebration-a time for family and friends to get together and share the joy of the season.

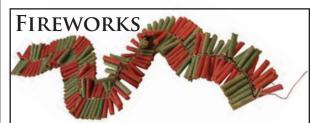
#### **Christmas Trees-**

- It is recommended that you purchase an artificial, fire-proof tree
- If you buy a real tree, make sure it is as fresh as possible, not brown, no needles falling etc.
- Put a fresh diagonal cut, about an inch off the bottom, so water will flow through. Place in a secure base and keep water or wet sand in the base or use products designed to keep trees fresh
- Make sure the tree is far enough away (at least 3 feet) from any heat source(candles, fireplace etc.)
- **NEVER** try to burn the tree yourself in the fireplace to dispose of the tree.
- Dispose of your tree as soon as the season is over. Store your tree away from your home and allow for pick up

#### Lights-

- Make sure they are UL listed
- **NEVER** use more than 3 strands on a run (follow manufacturer's instructions).

- Make sure there is no frayed wiring
- It is preferable to use smaller bulbs with less heat
- **NEVER** use the lights when you are not at home or when you are asleep. Purchase timers for extra security.



The Houston Fire Department reminds citizens that it is **illegal** to discharge fireworks or to have fireworks in your possession in the City of Houston. Harris County residents should also be aware that HFD will be enforcing the fireworks ban in the Limited Purpose Annexation areas.

For more information on firework use in unincorporated areas of Harris County, please visit the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office Website:

#### http://www.hcfmo.net/fireworks.aspx

The fines are anywhere from \$500 - \$2000 for each individual firework. Each case is different and it would be up to a judge to determine the exact amount. Warnings are no longer used because of the seriousness of the firework laws.

If a minor is caught with fireworks, the parent or guardian will receive the fine even if they were unaware of the minor's possession and/ or usage.

Citizens should report all complaints regarding the illegal use of fireworks directly to the HPD Tel-communicator (non-emergency line) at 713-884-3131. If the citizen believes that there may be a fire and/or medical emergency related to the use of fireworks, he/she should dial 9-1-1 and request the HFD.





#### Don't Become A Prisoner In Your Own Home!

Tragedies occur when children and adults become trapped inside their homes, unable to escape a fire because of burglar bars! The installation and use of burglar bars are regulated by the City of Houston Uniform Building Code. Consult the code!

Bars, grilles or grates must meet the following requirements:

- Must be able to be opened from the inside without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort (a child should be able to open the bars and easily get out).
- The recommended released mechanism for hinged burglar bars would be a single cylinder deadbolt lock with a thumb and forefinger turn lever on the inside cylinder or other quick release device
- If your burglar bars require a key to open, keep the key near the bars, at all times, for easy access in case of fire. Review with your family where the key is kept and how to use it to open the burglar bars.

- For security purposes, the deadbolt on a hinged burglar bar could be protected from outside intrusion by the use of expanded metal or a plate to prevent intruders from reaching the release lever.
- **DO NOT** install burglar bars, grilles, grates or any device on windows or doors used for escape routes that cannot easily be opened from the inside. **In a fire, your life will depend on it!**
- If burglar bars are installed, your home should have smoke detectors installed protecting each sleeping area or hallway. One smoke detector is required for each level of the house and install detectors on the ceiling near the stairway when bedrooms are located upstairs.

The signal from a smoke alarm must be able to be heard from every bedroom.