

Certified Family Home Fire/Life Safety Best Practices

Ingress

- Make sure that firefighters can enter and make their way through the home. Clear paths through the home should exist so firefighters can do their jobs.
- If windows are barred, the home should notify their fire department of this in advance of an emergency.

Egress

- Make sure windows and doorways used for escaping the home are kept clear.
 - Do not use attached limiters in egress windows. To limit window function, consider the use of a rod in the bottom rail that can be easily removed in case the window needs to be used as an exit.
- Avoid the use of complicated or multiple locks on exit doors.
 - Are locks in easy reach of the residents, particularly those using wheelchairs?

Evacuation Plan

- Are there at least two ways out of each room in the home?
- Has a designated meeting area been identified?
- Who will help those needing assistance with evacuation?
 - Assistance should only be given in the course of exiting. Do not return inside the home.
 - After reaching the exit, there is no time to return inside to help someone else.
 - Escape paths that were initially clear may not remain clear if a return were to be attempted.
- Who is accountable?
 - Has someone been designated as the lead to work with the fire department?
 - Can the lead give a count of who was in the home?
 - Can the lead describe to the firefighters by direction (north/south/east/west) how the rooms are configured in the home, and where any missing people may be located?

Fire Drills

- Practice the evacuation plan!
 - Mechanical memory develops when the sound of the smoke alarm automatically triggers the evacuation process. This saves lives.
 - To simulate evacuation in a real fire, practice with blindfolds and crawl to the exit.
 - Vary where the pretended fire is located...how will the location effect evacuation?
- Time the drills.
 - All people in the home need to be evacuated in less than three minutes.
 - Seconds may count in the event of a real fire. Practice being calm, but efficient.
- Once outside, remain outside.
 - Do not reenter the home until the "all clear" is given.

Compartmentalization

- Make sure doors latch. If a fire does occur, a closed door that latches may give additional minutes for evacuation.
- Always sleep with the door closed. The fumes from a fire will cause a deeper sleep, so hearing the alarm before the fumes reach the bed is the desired result.

Smoke Detectors

- Smoke detectors should not be placed in spaces with dead air. If mounted on the wall, it should be at least 12 inches from the corner and 6 inches from the ceiling.
- Smoke detectors should be replaced at least every 10 years.
- Chirping in an interconnected system may not come from the smoke detector needing a battery replacement. All smoke detector batteries in an interconnected home should be replaced if chirping occurs.
- For most accurate testing of equipment, a small spritz of canned smoke is recommended. It may take several minutes, but the alarm should sound. Do not overspray as the smoke may coat the components and prevent future detection.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- It does not matter whether CO alarms are located high or low in a room. Carbon monoxide is the same weight as air. It neither rises nor sinks, but fills a room at the same rate as normal air. The best location is close to vents.

Fire Extinguishers

- Fire extinguishers should be mounted and not just kept under cabinets. They can get moved to the back and become inaccessible.
- Check the nozzle to see if there is a powder; presence of powder indicates a leak. The pressure gauge can stick and not be accurate.
- The plastic tamper seal should not be removed. To easily remove the seal when using the extinguisher, simply twist the pin.

Mitigate Fire Events

- Fire events require three things: fuel, oxygen, and ignition.
 - Open flames pose an extreme ignition risk. Avoid the use of candles, particularly those positioned on or near combustible materials like doilies.
 - Be cautious of torchiere lamps, particularly those without shades. They should never be used as coatracks. If the lamp is turned on, cloth material will heat and eventually ignite.
 - Cloth lamp shades that are askew and in close proximity to the bulb can heat and ignite.
 - Fireplaces should have 36" clearance of any combustible materials. This includes the mantle. As hot air rises, the heat from the fireplace will dry out combustible materials sitting on the mantle, and a spark rising from the fireplace can easily ignite that material.
 - Combustibles should not be stored above any heat source. For instance, vegetable oil should never be stored in the cabinet above a range.
 - Liquid oxygen makes the combustible materials around it far more susceptible to ignition. Oxygen tanks should never be stored in a clothes closet. Even the carpet or

wood flooring the tank sits on becomes far more combustible. It is recommended that oxygen tanks sit on concrete or ceramic tile; however, metal trays may also be used, such as the type a water heater sits upon.

- Never allow liquid oxygen to come into contact with hydrocarbons, such as oil. That mixture becomes extremely volatile, where even electrostatic shock will cause an explosion.
- Smoking and oxygen tanks are a bad combination. If a resident using oxygen wishes to smoke, they should do so away from the equipment and only after having removed the cannula for over 3 minutes, more if the resident has facial hair.
- 36" clearance of combustible materials should be given to all gas-fired appliances. A backdraft will cause the pilot light to flare at the base.
- Dryer ductwork should be cleaned at least annually; excess lint is susceptible to ignition from the heat of the dryer.
- Ventilation fans should be cleaned at least annually; excess dust is susceptible to ignition from the heat of the motor.
- Don't use kitty-litter to soak up oil spills; that mixture will spontaneously combust hours later and cause a fire.
- Hay bales used as insulation around the underside perimeter of trailer will intensify a fire.
- Be careful with dry weeds, grass, wood, or other organic materials that have dried out.
 - Dry weeds next to an outdoor barbeque or fire pit pose a hazard.
 - Refracting light through glass or off metal may ignite combustible materials if the environment has the right conditions. Be careful of pitchers and/or pop cans where light is refracted and pinpointed into dry grass or wood.
 - Gutters should be cleaned annually, as they collect combustible materials like pine needles, which dry out and will ignite with a spark.

Chemical Hazards

- Chlorine (or bleach) cleaners should be separated from ammonia cleaners, and should never be used at the same time. A mixture of chlorine and ammonia will produce chloramine vapor, and possibly hydrazine, which are toxic gases.
- Always add water to chemical, not chemical to water. There is potential for splash-back, and caustic chemicals can cause severe burns.

Electrical Hazards

- Be cautious of power taps (i.e., surge protectors) and extension cords.
 - Most power taps are designed for computer equipment with low wattage, and will only trip if there is an actual surge event. However, if using high wattage equipment (e.g., toasters, mixers, or coffee makers), the breaker will not trip, but the unit will heat up and become a fire hazard. Check for heat at the point where the cord and tap intersect.
 - Power taps or extension cords should not be used while tightly coiled. If a heavy current-drawing appliance is used, the heat will melt the insulation and ignite the cord.
 - Extension cords should not be run under rugs. The cord could fray or kink without being seen, overheat, and cause a fire.
 - Do not "daisy chain" or "piggyback" extension cords and/or power taps (i.e., connect more than one in a linear series). This can cause an overload on the circuit and lead to failure and a possible fire.

- An electrical panel that has a breaker which continually trips is a sign of a serious problem. Have a licensed electrician inspect the breaker if it trips often.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

- Most natural disasters in Idaho are due to severe weather.
 - Heat
 - Cold
 - Wind
- Wildfires can threaten both rural and metro areas.
- Flooding poses a danger whenever people live near a body of water.
 - Flooding is not just about the water; it is also about access. Bridges may be out, which will affect the ability to get supplies into the area.
- Think of emergency preparedness in terms of scale (i.e., is the disaster affecting the home, the neighborhood, the city, or the region?) and be prepared to answer the following for each scale of a disaster:
 - Where will we go?
 - How long will we be away?
 - How will we get there?
 - Will we be welcomed when we arrive?
 - Will there be enough supplies?
 - Need at least a 3-day supply