



FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION INFORMATION

Outdoor

- Keep your yard clear of excess clutter and debris including vegetation and materials. Visit <https://firesmartbc.ca/> to learn more details.
- Follow all outdoor burning guidelines as outlined on <https://spid.ca/burning-restrictions>
- Safely dispose of smoking materials in a deep, sturdy ashtray. Do not discard cigarettes in vegetation such as mulch, potted plants, landscaping, dried grasses, or leaves - these can ignite easily. Before you throw away butts, make sure they are doused in water or sand.

BBQ's

- Propane and charcoal grills should only be used outside.
- Place grill well away from the home, out from under eaves and away from vegetation.
- Never leave cooking unattended.
- Keep flammable liquids away from live coals to avoid explosions and burns.
- Keep children safely away from the barbecue.
- Before you start your barbeque make sure the stand is level and steady.
- Keep a container of water nearby when the charcoal is burning.
- To start a charcoal fire, use an approved charcoal electric starter or chemicals in cake form. Never use gasoline, naptha, or other flammable materials to start a charcoal fire.
- Never add fire starter after you have started your barbecue to speed a slow fire or rekindle a dying fire; tuck dry kindling under coals.
- When you are finished cooking, soak the coals with water to prevent their re-ignition.
- Never keep damp or wet charcoals in an unventilated area; drying coals can spontaneously combust.

Characteristics of Fire in the Home

- The effects of a fire in real life are more drastic than what is shown on TV and in movies.
- Fires in homes give off thick, black smoke that makes it almost impossible to see. Even though you are in your own home, you can become disoriented and go the wrong way – perhaps towards the fire!
- In a fire the smoke will kill you long before the flames get close. Smoke contains poisonous gases that deaden your senses and prevent you from waking up.
- Most fires happen at night when people are asleep. Without smoke alarms, you have little chance of getting out alive.
- Fires give off intense heat, up to 2,000 degrees Celsius at ceiling level. These temperatures will cause severe burns and will quickly render you unconscious.
- A fire can spread extremely quickly, engulfing a home in a matter of a few minutes. Smoke alarms and a home fire escape plan will help you get out safely.

Escape Plans

- Identify two ways out of every room. Windows can be your second way out but make sure they are easily opened from the inside and allow enough room to exit the structure.
- Choose a family meeting place a safe distance from the front of your home.
- Make sure your plan considers people with mobility issues and young children who may require assistance from others.
- Practice getting out of your home by all exits by holding fire drills for the entire family.
- When the smoke alarm sounds, expect that you must get out immediately. Do not stop to collect possessions or pets.
- Always stay low to avoid smoke and to stay in the cleanest air.
- Feel any closed doors for heat before opening – stay low behind the door and feel the door from the bottom up to and including the door handle.
- If the door and handle feel cool, open the door slightly and look outside. If it looks safe, then leave the building, and head for your family meeting place.
- If the door or handle feels warm, or if you see smoke or flames beyond the door, make sure the door is shut and use your second escape route. If your escape route is on the second floor, plan for a safe way to reach the ground such as a fire escape ladder.
- If you are trapped in a room, close the door, and seal the openings around the door and vents with clothing or blankets. Call 9-1-1 and tell the operator that you are trapped inside. If it is safe to do so, open the window, turn the light on and signal and call for help.

Smoke Alarms

- Properly placed smoke alarms will warn everyone in case of fire.
- Install several smoke alarms in your home. Place at least one on every level. Consider installing additional alarms both inside and outside bedrooms, especially for heavy sleepers, children, and those with disabilities.
- Connect hard wired smoke alarms directly to the backup power system or install a battery powered smoke alarm on every level of your home in case of power failure.
- Do not install alarms near the kitchen to minimise false alarms from cooking.
- Alarms should not be installed within 10 feet (3 meters) of a stove
- Test smoke alarms every month. Replace batteries once a year.
- Vacuum smoke alarms at least once every six months.
- Replace smoke alarms as specified by the manufacturer.

Carbon Monoxide Safety

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless and poisonous gas that can make you feel and can cause death. In the home, heating and cooking devices that burn fuel can be sources of carbon monoxide.
- CO alarms should be installed outside each sleeping area, install alarms on every level of the home.
- As per smoke detectors, it is best to use interconnected alarms.

Fire Extinguishers

- A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives.
- Because fire grows and spreads so rapidly, number one priority for residents is to get out safely.
- To operate a fire extinguisher, remember the word **PASS**
 - Pull, Aim, Squeeze, Sweep
- Install fire extinguishers close to an exit and keep your back to a clear exit when you use device so you can make an easy escape if fire cannot be controlled
 - If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately

Prevention and Safety

- Sleep with your bedroom door closed. Most fires do not start in the bedroom and the door will act as a barrier between you and the smoke and fire.
- Purchase Fire Blankets – these low cost items are made of fire-resistant materials and smother flames. They are effective for small cooking or grease fires and for wrapping people whose clothes have ignited.
- Do not store flammable liquids near a heating source. Ideally, these liquids should be stored in their approved containers, outside the home in a cool ventilated area.
- Oily rags can spontaneously combust as they dry so they must be stabilized before disposal. Lay the rags flat in a single layer on a non-combustible outdoor surface like concrete until completely dry.
- Clean your dryer lint trap with every load and clean the dryer vent at least once a year.
- Keep lighters and matches away from children.
- Space Heaters should be placed on a flat surface, keeping a minimum of 3-foot clearance from all flammable materials such as drapes, furniture and bedding. Always plug the heater directly into a wall outlet and never into an extension cord. Turn it off every time you leave the room or go to sleep.

Cooking

- Never leave food cooking unattended.
- Keep flammable items such as clothing, oven mitts and towels away from the stove
- Smother flames with a fire blanket or lid.
- Do not use water to extinguish flames as it can cause the flames to spread.

Candles

- Candles are a leading cause of fire in homes in Canada. Flameless candles are strongly recommended.
- Extinguish all candles before going to bed or leaving the room. Never leave burning candles unattended.
- Do not extinguish a candle with water. Snuff it instead.
- Do not burn candles on or near anything that can catch fire (like curtains, bedding, combustible decorations, and clothing).
- Keep candles out of the reach of children and pets.
- Place burning candles somewhere they cannot be knocked over and avoid flammable surfaces.
- Cut candle wicks short to prevent high flames.
- Use sturdy candle holders that won't easily tip over.

Indoor Wood Burning Fireplaces

Chimney fires can burn slowly and quietly or be dramatically explosive accompanied by noise not unlike a freight train or a low flying airplane. Flames or dense smoke may shoot from the top of the chimney. By burning seasoned wood and practicing proper chimney system care, chimney fires are entirely preventable.

- Burn seasoned, thoroughly dried wood only. Dryness is more important than the type of wood being burned.
- Build smaller, hotter fires that burn more completely and produce less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, wrapping paper or trash; these can start a chimney fire.
- Have the chimney inspected and cleaned on a regular basis – at least, once a year.

What to do if you have a chimney fire:

If you realize a chimney fire is occurring, get everyone out of the house and call **911**.

After calling 911 for fire department assistance, and if you can do so without risk to yourself or others, these additional steps may help save your home; however, remember that homes are replaceable – lives are not:

- Have a sandwich baggie full of baking soda near the fireplace and toss it into the fire; or, toss a small amount of water (less than one cup) on the fire.
- Cut off the air supply to the fire by closing dampers, fireplace doors, etc.
- From ground-level outside, if practical and safe, use a garden hose to spray down the roof (not the chimney) so the fire from the top of the chimney will not spread to the rest of the structure.
- Wait outside for the firefighters to arrive.

Electric Battery Safety

Take care when using any type of battery. In some cases, they can cause a fire or explosion. As with any product, a small number of batteries can be defective, overheat, catch fire or explode. Sometimes batteries are being used in ways they were not designed for, this can be dangerous.

Rechargeable batteries, such as lithium ion (Li-ion), nickel cadmium (NiCd), nickel-metal hydride (NiMH), supply power to many kinds of devices including:

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| • Smart phones | • E-cigarettes |
| • Laptops | • Smoke alarms |
| • Scooters | • Toys |
| • E-bikes | • Cars |

Safe Use of Batteries

- Buy devices that are listed by a qualified testing lab (e.g. UL mark for Underwriters Laboratory)
- Always follow manufacturer's instructions
- Only use the charging cord that came with the device.
- Never charge a device under your pillow, on your bed or under your couch.
- Keep batteries at room temperature, do not place in direct sunlight or keep them in hot vehicles.
- Store batteries away from anything that can catch fire
- Never disassemble or alter batteries in an attempt to enhance their performance.
- Stop using the battery immediately and move the device away from anything (if it is safe to do so) that can catch fire, if you notice:

- An odour
- A change in colour
- Overheating
- Change in Shape
- Leaking
- Odd noises

Disposing of Batteries

- Do not put batteries in the garbage or in regular recycling (e.g. blue boxes)
- Batteries need to be recycled properly at designated battery recycling locations such as Return-it Depots or the Comox Valley Regional District Waste Facility.

Electrical Fire Prevention

Home Electrical System

Inadequate wiring in a home is a fire hazard. If your home matches any of the following statements, contact a certified electrician to inspect your electrical system.

Examples of inadequate electrical wiring:

- You blow a fuse or circuit breaker when plugging in more than one appliance in an area of your home
- You run multiple extension cords because you don't have enough outlets
- Your small appliances such as toaster or irons are slow to heat.
- You notice that lights dim when you use certain appliances.

Electrical Appliances

- Buy appliances approved by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA)
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Disconnect small appliances (toaster, toast oven, coffee maker) before cleaning them.
- Have defective appliances checked by a professional.
- Disconnect small appliances when not in use, for instance when you are on vacation.
- Inspect and discard all cords and plugs that are worn or frayed
- Never break off the third (ground) prong on a plug
- Replace two-pronged outlets with properly installed three-pronged outlets.
- Use multi-outlet extenders (power bars and surge protectors) sparingly. Prolonged use can risk overloading a single circuit.
- Do not run electrical cords beneath carpets.
- Keep electrical cords away from sources of heat and from water.