

# **FIRE SAFE** South Carolina



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A COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM

## FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY GUIDE

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#FireSafeSC

SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL | 141 MONTICELLO TRAIL COLUMBIA, SC

# Fire and Life Safety Guide



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## Fall Prevention at Home

Slips, trips, and falls can hurt everyone. A fall can be a life-threatening for the young and elderly. Changing personal habits may help to prevent falls.

### Good Habits to Prevent Falls

- Wear well fitting, low-heeled shoes with non-slip features.
- Have an emergency plan in place. Keep contact information and a means of communication, such as a cell phone, accessible.
- Moving slowly when standing from a seated position will reduce the chances of being unsteady. Once standing, get your balance before walking. Sitting a moment before you get out of bed can also reduce your risk of a fall.
- Regularly exercise to build strength and improve balance and coordination. Consult with your doctor before exercising.
- Have an eye exam once a year. Vision issues can increase the chances of a fall.

### Around the Home

- Be aware of uneven surfaces inside and outside the house.
- Keep walking surfaces clean of spilled liquids and immediately clean up any spills.
- Only use floor rugs with non-skid backing. Consider putting a non-skid rug pad under rugs. Look out for wrinkles or folds in carpet and smooth them out immediately.
- Install grab bars on walls in showers and bath tubs as well as near toilets. Use non-slip floor mats and shower mats to prevent slips.
- Keep stairs and walkways clear.
- Keep stairways well lit from the top to the bottom. Have sturdy, easy to grip handrails along the length of the stairway.
- Improve visibility inside and outside the home by increasing lighting. Place nightlights on commonly used paths around the home, turn lights on before using stairs, and keep a flashlight handy for outside use.

### Impact of a Fall

- Falls are the leading cause of fatal injury among older adults, and one of the most common causes of non-fatal hospital admissions.
- Falls can cause decreased activities and social interactions which also impacts quality of life.

## Fire Safe Behaviors at Home

Most fires in the home start because of a careless activity, which means we can stop most fires before they start by being more careful. Early detection to a fire in the home is key to survival. Once we know there is a fire, we must escape.

### Fire Prevention

In South Carolina, cooking, smoking, electrical, and heating related fires are the leading causes of fire fatalities.

- Cooking equipment, most often a range or stovetop, is the leading cause of reported home fires and injuries in the United States. Be sure to remain with your cooking and use a timer to remind you to check your food. Keep anything that can catch fire - potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels, or curtains - away from your stovetop.
- Put cigarettes all the way out-every time. Don't walk away from lit cigarettes and other smoking materials. Put water on the ashes and butts to make sure they are out before you put them in the trash.
- Having unsafe conditions such as overloaded circuits, damaged wire insulation, misusing extension cords, and other electrical products can cause a fire or electric shock hazards.
- Keep heaters at least three feet away from anything that may catch on fire, such as furniture, rugs, or clothing. Remember, heat your air, not your stuff.

### Fire Detection

Fires can be detected through the use of smoke alarms, but only if smoke alarms are installed properly in the right locations, and maintained.

- Residential smoke alarms are rated for 10 years. Follow manufacture's guidelines for replacing smoke alarms. When in doubt, replace the alarm. The date of manufacture can be found on the back of your alarm. If the date is missing or unreadable, replace the alarm.
- Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of your home. In the basement, install on the ceiling at the bottom of the stairs leading to the next level.
- Test smoke alarms, at least once a month, and replace batteries every year.

### Fire Escape

Fire can spread rapidly through your home. When a fire is detected, you have no time to escape as smoke from the fire can quickly hurt you. Having and practicing a fire drill plan may save a life.

- Create an escape plan marking two ways out of each room. Draw it out, and practice twice a year-no matter how old you are.
- Mark a safe meeting place on your plan. Pick a solid object not easily moved and make sure that object is a safe distance from the home.

## Home Fire Drills

According to the NFPA, items that block doors and windows in your home could keep you from escaping in the event of a home fire. That may mean the difference between life and death. So, unblock your exits today! The key to your family's safety is planning and practicing a home fire escape plan twice a year. Start by identifying two escape routes out of each room, if possible, then make sure each of those escape routes can be safely used by everyone.

### The Home Fire Drill Planner

- Draw the layout of your home as best as you can. Be sure to include each room with all doors and windows. Draw the location of each smoke alarm and label them as "SA." Draw a separate plan for each floor.
- Draw arrows on your "Fire Drill Planner" showing two ways out of every room.
- Mark a safe meeting place on your plan. Pick a solid object not easily moved and make sure it is a safe distance from the home.

### Remember

- Practice your fire drill every six months. Try escaping from every room and **closing doors as you escape.**
- **Sleeping with your bedroom door closed** may save your life.
- **Closing doors** as you escape may save your life.
- Doorways and windows should open easily to get outside.
- If safe, windows can be used for escape outside.
- Practice with your family to make sure you can open the window, remove any screens, and safely get to the ground.
- **NEVER** stop to pick up anything on the way out (even while practicing your fire drill).
- **NEVER** go back into the home **FOR ANY REASON** (even while practicing your fire drill).
- Call 911 from outside the home, after you've escaped (pretend to call 911 when practicing your fire drill).

**Click here to find a copy of our "Home Fire Drill Planner":**

[http://www.scfiremarshal.llronline.com/crr/Forms/Home\\_escape\\_plan.pdf](http://www.scfiremarshal.llronline.com/crr/Forms/Home_escape_plan.pdf)

## Alarms

### Smoke Alarms

There are two types of smoke alarms – ionization and photoelectric. An ionization smoke alarm is more responsive to flaming fires. A photoelectric smoke alarm is more responsive to slow smoldering fires. For the best protection, use both types of alarms or combination ionization-photoelectric alarms.

- Follow manufacturer's instructions for proper installation, cleaning, and maintenance.
- Check the date on each alarm. Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years or if they do not respond properly during testing.
- Be sure you have smoke alarms located inside and outside of each bedroom or sleeping area.
- You should have, at least, one on each level of your home.
- Smoke alarms should be installed at least 10 feet from a cooking appliance
- Test your smoke alarms at least once a month.
- Smoke alarms with non-replaceable 10-year batteries are designed to remain effective for up to 10 years. If the alarm chirps, the battery is low. Replace the entire smoke alarm.
- For smoke alarms with any other type of battery, replace the battery at least once a year.
  - When replacing a battery, follow manufacturer's instructions. These instructions are specific to the batteries (brand and model) that must be used. The smoke alarm may not work properly if instructions are not followed.

### Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms

The only safe way to detect CO in your home is with a CO alarm. Every home with a fuel-burning appliance, attached garage or fireplace should have a CO alarm(s). Choose a CO alarm that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.

- Follow manufacturer's instructions for proper installation, cleaning, and maintenance.
- CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home and in other locations where required by applicable laws, codes, or standards. For the best protection, interconnect all CO alarms throughout the home.
- Test CO alarms, at least, once a month; replace them according to manufacturer's instructions.
- If the CO alarm sounds, immediately move to a fresh air location outdoors. Make sure everyone is accounted for. Call 9-1-1 from a fresh air location.
- Use a generator in a well-ventilated location outdoors away from windows, doors and vent openings. Gas or charcoal grills can produce CO — only use outside.

### Specialty Smoke Alarms

The deaf and hard-of-hearing are at special risk during a fire because they may not be able to hear traditional smoke alarms. Reduce this risk by using specialty smoke alarms.

- Follow manufacturer's instructions for proper installation, cleaning, and maintenance.
- Visual Smoke Alarm - a visual component, such as strobe lights alert when smoke is detected. Install a flashing smoke alarm on each level of the home.
- Install a "bed-shaker." A bed-shaker is not a smoke alarm, rather it works with smoke alarms in the home to notify hearing impaired individuals of a possible life-threatening fire emergency while they are asleep in their bed.

South Carolina residents who are hearing impaired may qualify for a free "bed-shaker." To see if you qualify, visit: <http://firesafe.sc.gov/hearingimpairedalarms.html>

## Halloween

According to information provided by the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), Halloween is a fun holiday. But it's also an important time to practice fire safety. The occurrence of fire increases around Halloween due to arson and the use of candles as decorations. Here are some Halloween safety tips provided by the USFA:

- If you buy a costume, make sure the label says "Flame Resistant." Flame Resistant means the costume will be hard to catch on fire and if it does, the fire will go out fast.
- If you make a costume, try not to make one that is big and baggy so that the material doesn't touch candles or other flames. Use flame-resistant fabrics, such as polyester and nylon. These materials will resist burning if exposed to a flame.
- Kids should never carry candles when they are trick-or-treating. Always use a flashlight, flameless candle, or light stick.
- Tell kids to let you know right away if they see other kids playing with matches or lighters.
- Don't use candles for decorations. They're dangerous, especially when left unattended.
- Use only decorative lights tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Throw away damaged sets. Don't overload extension cords.
- Check the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website for the latest on Halloween-related consumer product recalls. <https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls>
- If you have a Halloween party, check for cigarettes under furniture cushions and in areas where people were smoking before you go to bed.

## Jack-O'-Lantern Safety

- Use battery operated candles or glow sticks in jack-o'-lanterns.
- Tell kids to stay away from candles and jack-o'-lanterns that may be on steps and porches. Their costumes could catch fire if they get too close.
- If you choose to use a real candle, be very careful.
  - Make sure children are supervised.
  - Use a long fireplace style match (utility lighter) to light candles inside a jack-o'-lantern.
  - Be aware of areas around pumpkins with lit candles. Place them away from flammable materials and keep them out of pathways.
  - Have an extinguishing device, such as a bucket of water or a fire extinguisher, near lit jack-o'-lanterns in case of an emergency.