

# **FIRE SAFETY CHECKLIST**

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## Home Kitchen Area

### The Range Area

Are towels, curtains, and other things that might catch fire located away from the range?

**Suggestion:** Placing or storing non-cooking equipment, such as potholders, dish towels, and plastic utensils on or near the range may result in fires or burns.

- Store flammable and combustible items away from the range and oven.
- Remove any towels hanging on oven handles. If towels hang close to a burner, change the location of the towel rack.
- If necessary, shorten or remove curtains which could brush against heat sources.

What kind of clothing do you wear while you are cooking?

**Suggestion:** Long sleeves are more likely to catch fire than are short sleeves. Long sleeves are also more apt to catch on pot handles, overturning pots and pans and causing scalds.

- Roll back long, loose sleeves or fasten them with pins or elastic bands while you are cooking.

Are kitchen ventilation systems or range exhausts functioning properly, and are they in use while you are cooking?

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**Suggestion:** Indoor air pollutants may accumulate to unhealthful levels in a kitchen where gas or kerosene-fire appliances are in use.

- Use ventilation systems or open windows to clear air of vapors and smoke.

Are all extension cords and appliance cords located away from the sink and range areas?

**Suggestion:** Electrical appliances and power cords can cause shock or electrocution if they come in contact with water. Cords can also be damaged by excess heat.

- Move cords and appliances away from sink areas and hot surfaces.
- Move appliances closer to wall outlets or to different outlets so you won't need extension cords.
- If extension cords must be used, install wiring guides so that cords will not hang near sink, range, or working areas.
- Consider adding new outlets for convenience and safety; ask your electrician to install outlets equipped with ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to protect against electric shock. A GFCI is a shock-protection device that will detect electrical fault and shut off electricity before serious injury or death occurs.

Do you have adequate lighting over the stove, sink and countertop work areas, especially where food is sliced?

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**Suggestion:** Low lighting and glare can contribute to burns and cuts. Improve lighting by:

- Opening curtains and blinds (unless this causes too much glare).
- Using the maximum-wattage bulb allowed by the fixture. (If you do not know the correct wattage for the fixture, use a bulb no larger than 60 watts.)
- Reducing glare by using frosted bulbs, indirect lighting, shades and globes on light fixtures, and partially closing the blinds or curtains.
- Installing additional light fixtures under cabinets and over the countertop.

Make sure that the bulbs you use are the right type and wattage for the light fixture.

Let's check for faulty wiring throughout the house.

Are cords pulled out from beneath furniture and rugs or carpeting?

**Suggestion:** Furniture resting on cords can damage them, creating fire and shock hazards. Electric cords which run under carpeting may cause a fire.

- Remove cords from under furniture or carpeting.
- Replace damaged and frayed cords.

Are cords attached to the walls, baseboards, etc., with nails or staples?

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**Suggestion:** Nails and staples can damage cords, presenting fire and shock hazards.

- Remove nails, staples, etc.
- Check wiring for damage.
- Use tape to attach cords to walls or floors.

Are electrical cords in good condition, and not frayed or cracked?

**Suggestion:** Damaged cords may cause a shock or fire.

- Replace frayed or cracked cords.

Do extension cords carry more than their proper load, as indicated by the ratings labeled on the cord and the appliance?

**Suggestion:** Overloaded extension cords may cause fires. Standard 18-gauge extension cords can carry 1,250 watts.

- If the rating on the cord is exceeded because of the power requirements of one or more appliances being used on the cord, change the cord to a higher-rated one, or unplug some appliances.
- If an extension cord is needed, use one having a sufficient amp or wattage rating.

### **Check Smoke Detectors**

Are smoke detectors properly located?

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**Suggestion:** At least one smoke detector should be placed on every floor of your home.

- Read the instructions that come with the smoke detector for advice on the best place to install it.
- Make sure detectors are placed near bedrooms, either on the ceiling or 6 to 12 inches below the ceiling on the wall.
- Locate smoke detectors away from air vents.

Are your smoke detectors working properly?

**Suggestion:** Many fire injuries and deaths in homes are caused by smoke and toxic gases, rather than the fire itself. Smoke detectors provide an early warning and can wake you in the event of a fire.

- Purchase a smoke detector if you do not have one.
- Check and replace batteries and bulbs according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Vacuum the grillwork of your smoke detector periodically.
- Replace any smoke detectors which can not be repaired.

**NOTE:** Some fire departments or local governments will provide assistance in acquiring or installing smoke detectors.

## **CHECK ELECTRICAL OUTLETS AND SWITCHES**

Are any outlets or switches unusually warm or hot to the touch?

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**Suggestion:** Unusually warm or hot outlets or switches may indicate that an unsafe wiring condition exists.

- Unplug cords from outlets and do not use the switches.
- Have an electrician check the wiring as soon as possible.

Do all outlets and switches have cover plates, so that no wiring is exposed?

Suggestion: Exposed wiring presents a shock hazard.

- Add a cover plate.

Are light bulbs the appropriate size and type for the lamp or fixture?

**Suggestion:** A bulb of too high a wattage or the wrong type may lead to fire through overheating. Ceiling fixtures, recessed lights, and "hooded" lamps will trap heat.

- Replace with a bulb of the correct type and wattage. (If you do not know the correct wattage, use a bulb no larger than 60 watts.)

## **CHECK SPACE HEATERS**

Are heaters which come with a three-prong plug being used in a three-hole outlet or with a properly attached adapter?

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**Suggestion:** The grounding feature provided by a three-hole receptacle or an adapter for a two-hole receptacle is a safety feature designed to lessen the risk of shock.

- Never defeat the grounding feature.
- If you do not have a three-hole outlet, use an adapter to connect the heater's three-prong plug. Make sure the adapter, ground wire or tab is attached to the outlet.
- Do not use electric space heaters in the bathroom or around other wet areas.
- Do not dry or store objects on top of your heater.
- Keep combustibles away from heat sources.

Are small stoves and heaters placed where they cannot be knocked over, and away from furnishings and flammable materials, such as curtains and rugs?

**Suggestion:** Heaters can cause fires or serious burns if they cause you to trip or if they are knocked over.

- Relocate heaters away from passageways and flammable materials such as curtains, rugs, furniture, etc.

If your home has space heating equipment, such as a kerosene heater, a gas heater, or an LP gas heater, do you understand the installation and operating instructions thoroughly?

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**Suggestion:** Unvented heaters should be used with the room door open or a window slightly open to provide ventilation. The correct fuel, as recommended by the manufacturer, should always be used. Vented heaters should have proper venting, and the venting system should be checked frequently. Improper venting is the most frequent cause of carbon monoxide poisoning, and older consumers are at particular risk.

- Review the installation and operating instructions.
- Call your local fire department if you have additional questions.

### **CHECK WOOD BURNING HEATING EQUIPMENT**

Was the wood burning equipment installed properly?

**RECOMMENDATION:** Wood burning stoves should be installed by a qualified person, according to local building codes.

- Local building code officials or fire marshals can provide requirements and recommendations for installation.

**NOTE:** Some insurance companies will not cover fire losses if wood stoves are not installed according to local codes.

### **CHECK THE FUSE BOX OR CIRCUIT BREAKERS**

If fuses are used, are they the correct size for the circuit?

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**Suggestion:** Replacing a correct-size fuse with a larger size fuse can present a serious fire hazard. If the fuse in the box is rated higher than that intended for the circuit, excessive current will be allowed to flow and possibly overload the outlet and house wiring to the point that a fire can occur.

- Be certain that correct-size fuses are used. (If you do not know the correct sizes, consider having an electrician identify and label the sizes to be used.)

**NOTE:** If all, or nearly all, fuses used are 30-amp fuses, there is a chance that some of the fuses are rated too high for the circuit.

## **CHECK APPLIANCES AND POWER TOOLS**

Are power tools equipped with a three-prong plug or marked to show that they are double-insulated?

**Suggestion:** These safety features reduce the risk of an electric shock.

- Use a properly connected three-prong adapter for connecting a three-prong plug to a two-hole receptacle.
- Consider replacing old tools that have neither a three-prong plug nor are double-insulated.

Are power tools guards in place?

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**Suggestion:** Power tools used with guards removed pose a serious risk of injury from sharp edges and moving parts.

- Replace guards that have been removed from power tools.

Has the grounding feature on any three-prong plug been defeated by removal of the grounding pin or by improperly using an adapter?

**Suggestion:** Improperly grounded appliances can lead to electric shock.

- Check with your service person or an electrician if you are in doubt.

### **CHECK FLAMMABLE AND VOLATILE LIQUIDS**

Are containers of volatile liquids tightly capped?

**Suggestion:** If not tightly closed, vapors may escape that may be toxic when inhaled.

- Check containers periodically to make sure they are tightly closed.

**NOTE:** There have been reports of several cases in which gasoline, stored as much as 10 feet from a gas water heater, exploded. Many people are unaware that gas fumes can travel that far.

Are gasoline, paints, solvents and other products that give off vapors and fumes stored away from ignition sources?

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**Suggestions:** Gasoline, kerosene and other flammable liquids should be stored out of living areas in properly labeled, non-glass safety containers.

- Remove these products from the areas near heat and flame such as heaters, furnaces, water heaters, ranges, and other gas appliances.