

YOUR HEALTH

YOUR SAFETY

OUR CONCERN

FIRE AT HOME



Most building fires in Oregon occur in the home. In 2009 alone, there were 2,379 residential structure fires. The most common place for a fire to start remains the kitchen, which accounted for 19% of residential fires in 2010. The chimney was the second leading location for fires. Cigarettes continue to be the single largest cause of home fires in the United States.

Fire Starters

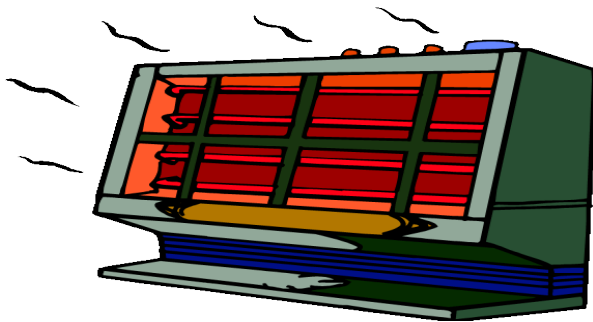
The causes of home fires are sometimes random - but more likely, they are caused by a small number of the usual suspects. Knowing a few preventative measures for space heaters, gas, and flammables can greatly reduce your risk.

Smoking is the leading cause of home fire deaths overall, but in the months of December, January, and February, smoking and heating equipment are equally responsible for deaths.



Space Heaters: Every year 25,000 residential fires are caused by space heaters across the country, causing at least 300 deaths. Space heater safety is serious! When you use a space heater—be it electric, gas, kerosene, or wood-burning—follow the manufacturer's instructions and remember these general guidelines:

- Use a space heater with a switch that turns it off automatically if it turns over.
- Position the heater on a solid and level, non-flammable surface.
- Place flammable items at least 3ft away from the heater.
- Space heaters should only be used to heat a room, not for anything else.
- Never use a heater with broken parts.
- Heaters shouldn't be used in wet or moist areas unless specifically designed to do so.



Gas Leaks: Natural gas is colorless and odorless. Distribution companies add the essence of rotten egg (mercaptan) so we can detect a leak. If you suspect a gas leak, there are some simple steps to take:

- Do not use anything that may spark—including electrical & battery-operated devices, light switches, matches, cell & land phones.
- Open as many doors and windows as possible.
- Evacuate everyone from the building.
- Call the local gas distributor. For the Portland area this is NW Natural 1-800-882-3377.
- If gas ignites, do not try to put out the flames. Call the fire department and then your gas supplier.

Flammables: Most of us have at least a few flammable liquids at home. Remember that these are fire hazards and should be stored and handled very carefully:

- Store flammable liquids in leak-proof containers outside the house/garage in a storage shed. If that's not possible, store them on shelves safely away from heat/spark sources.
- Fuel equipment outside, away from enclosed areas and heat/spark sources.
- Start equipment 10ft from where it was fueled.

Prevention & Planning

Fire in the home is a nightmare come true. The best you can do to prevent this disaster is be aware of the hazards and plan accordingly.

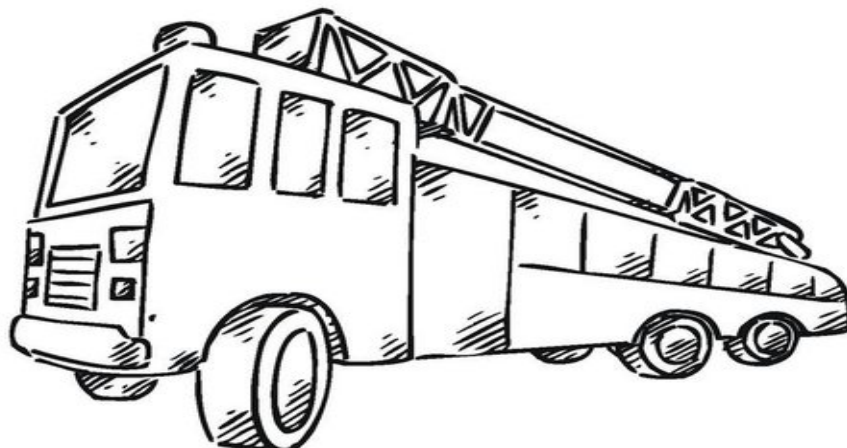
The Gear: Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are essential to keeping personal injuries and property damage to a minimum. Here are some quick tips for maintaining this practical safety equipment:

- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas.
- Test your detectors at least once a month.
- Replace the batteries at least once a year, or once the detector makes a chirping sound.
- Purchase an ABC type extinguisher for putting out all types of fires.
- Mount fire extinguishers in the kitchen, garage, and workshop.
- Read the instructions provided and learn how to use your fire extinguisher before an emergency.
- Extinguishers are only for small fires. If there is a large fire, evacuate immediately and call 911 from another location.



Fire Plan: Every household should have a well-rehearsed fire plan, so everyone knows exactly what to do in case of a fire:

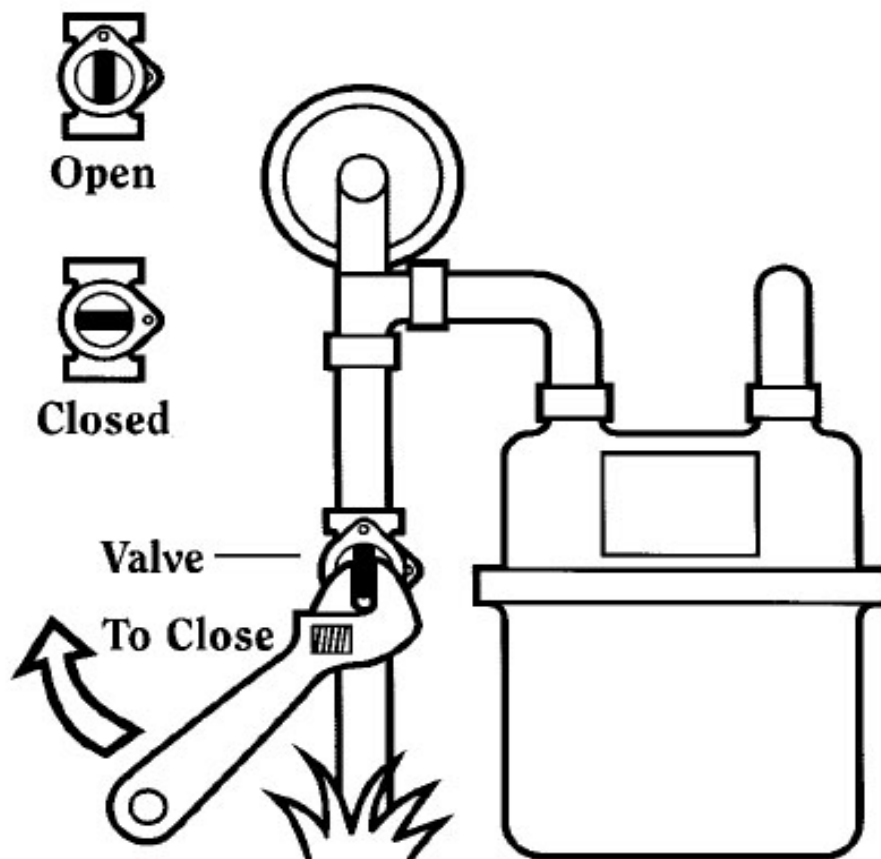
- Prepare a floor plan of your home showing at least two ways out of each room.
- Agree on a fixed location out-of-doors where everyone can gather for a head count.
- Practice staying low to the ground when escaping.
- Feel all doors before opening them. If a door is hot, exit another way.
- Stop, drop, and roll if clothes catch fire.



It's a Gas

If you smell a gas leak, first refer to safety instructions on the previous page. Then, once the place is safe and evacuated, you can turn off the gas line yourself:

- Get a crescent or pipe wrench and find the shutoff valve on the riser pipe that runs from the ground or foundation wall to your gas meter.
- When the valve head is parallel to the riser pipe, it is open. To close it, turn the valve head perpendicular to the pipe. You can turn off any valves on the lines fueling individual appliances the same way.
- Leave the gas off until your gas supplier comes and fixes the problem.



SOURCES:

www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM
www.nfpa.org/index.asp
www.firesafety.gov

