



PRESS RELEASE

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Protect Your Family & Home - Prevent Appliance Fires

Appliances help to simplify our lives, but they also pose a fire and injury risk if not properly maintained. Each year, thousands of residential fires occur involving appliances.

Washers & Dryers

Each year, washers and dryers cause 16,000 fires in homes resulting in deaths, injuries, and millions of dollars in property loss. The leading cause was failure to clean followed by mechanical failure/malfunction and electrical failure or malfunction. Dryer fires occur more frequently than washer fires and are the cause of the majority of these fires (92%). Prime periods for these types of fires are fall and winter with January being the peak month. When using these appliances, remember to:

Dryer

- Clean lint filter before or after each use.
 - Do not operate the dryer without a lint filter.
 - Remove accumulated lint around the drum.
- Annually, clean lint out of the vent pipe.
- Gas dryers should be inspected by a professional to ensure the gas line and connection are intact and free of leaks.

Washer

Although fires ignited by washers are infrequent (4%), they remain a fire and life safety hazard in which significant property damage occurs. When using a washer, follow these simple steps:

- Make sure the machine is properly connected and grounded.
- Follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Avoid overloading the machine.

**Note: Washer/dryer combinations account for 5% of home structure fires.*

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Cooking Equipment

To date, cooking fires remain the leading cause of home fire injuries. Of the reported home structure fires (2014 – 2018), cooking fires resulted in 49% of those fires. The leading contributor/factor of home fires and home fire deaths was unattended cooking. When using cooking equipment, keep these safety tips in mind:

Oven Ranges

- Keep burners, the stove top, and oven clean and free of grease and other flammable debris.
- Never leave flammable items such as hot pads or towels near burners.
- Don't leave food cooking. If you must leave the room, turn the stove off.

Microwave Ovens

- Avoid overheating liquids that may erupt causing severe burns.
- Keep the inside of the oven, the door, and all seals clean and free of debris.
- Never use metal pans and utensils.

Should a fire occur in the home, Prince William County Fire and Rescue System Chief Tim Keen advises residents to protect themselves and their families by implementing the following safety measures:

Smoke Alarms

Working smoke alarms increase your chances of surviving a fire by 50%
(www.pwcva.gov/smokealarms) be sure to:

- Install working smoke alarms outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home including the basement.
- Test smoke alarm batteries monthly.
- Replace batteries when you change your clock (spring and fall).

Home Fire Escape Plan

Each year, fires kill more Americans than all natural disasters combined. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), one of every 3 U.S. households have developed and practiced a home fire escape plan. While 71% of Americans have a plan, only 47% have practiced it. Chief Keen in conjunction with NFPA strongly urges families to:

- Make a home fire escape plan.
 - Have at least two escape routes from every room.
 - Practice the plan on a regular basis so everyone knows what to do in case of a fire.

For additional information visit the National Fire Protection Association www.nfpa.org and the U.S. Fire Administration www.usfa.fema.gov.

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