



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Fire Safety After a Disaster

Electrical Safety

- Lightning associated with thunderstorms generates a variety of fire hazards. The power of lightning's electrical charge and intense heat can electrocute on contact, splitting trees and causing fires.
- Be aware of and avoid downed utility lines. Report downed or damaged power lines to the utility company or emergency services.
- Pools of water and even appliances can be electrically charged.
- Appliances that have been exposed to water can short and become a fire hazard.
- If your home has sustained flood or water damage, turn off the power if you can safely get to the main breaker or fuse box.
- Assume all wires on the ground are electrically charged. This includes cable TV feeds.
- Have a licensed electrician check your home for damage.

Generator Safety

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions and guidelines when using generators.
- Use a generator or other fuel-powered machines outside the home. Carbon monoxide fumes are odorless and can quickly overwhelm you indoors.
- Use the appropriate size and type of power cords to carry the electric load. Overloaded cords can overheat and cause fires.
- Never run cords under rugs or carpets where heat might build up or damage to a cord may go unnoticed.
- Always refuel generators outdoors.
- Never connect generators to another power source such as power lines. The reverse flow of electricity or "backfeed" can electrocute an unsuspecting utility worker.

Gas Safety

- Smell and listen for leaky gas connections. If you believe there is a gas leak, immediately leave the house and leave the door(s) open.
- Never strike a match. Any size flame can spark an explosion.
- Before turning the gas back on, have the gas system checked by a professional.

Heating Safety

- Kerosene heaters may not be legal in your area and should be used only where approved by authorities.
- Do not use the kitchen range oven to heat your home. In addition to being a fire hazard, it can be a source of toxic fumes.
- Alternative heaters need their space. Keep anything combustible at least 3 feet away.
- Make sure your alternative heaters have “tip switches.” These tip switches automatically turn off the heater if they tip over.
- Use only the type of fuel recommended by the manufacturer and follow suggested guidelines.
- Never refill a space heater while it is operating or still hot.
- Refuel heaters only outdoors.
- Use a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to prevent sparks from igniting nearby carpets, furniture, or other combustible items.
- Do not use alternative heating devices to dry clothes or furnishings.
- Be careful when using candles. Keep the flame away from combustible objects and out of the reach of children.
- Never thaw frozen pipes with a blowtorch or other open flame. Use hot water or a UL-listed device such as a hand-held dryer.
- Some smoke alarms may depend on your home's electrical service and could be inoperative during a power outage. Check to see if your smoke alarm uses a backup battery and install a new battery at least once a year.
- If there is a fire hydrant near your home, keep it clear of debris so the fire department has easy access to it.

Chemical Safety

- Look for combustible liquids like gasoline, lighter fluid, and paint thinner that may have spilled. Thoroughly clean the spill and place containers in a well-ventilated area.
- Keep combustible liquids away from heat sources.

Adapted from resource material developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency