

FIRE PREVENTION

Preventing fire losses is largely dependent upon controlling sources of ignition and combustible materials. The most common causes of fire to church properties are from electrical and heating systems, lightning, candles, and arson. While fires are not the most frequent losses to church and school property, they can be the most devastating. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) provides nationally recognized standards and fire codes used in the United States for the prevention of fires. Most of the following guidelines for fire prevention come from these standards.

Poor housekeeping is one of the most common problems but it is also one of the easiest to correct. All storage rooms, classrooms, and offices should be checked at least weekly to ensure they are not cluttered with materials and that all storage items are organized, and whenever possible, placed on shelves or in cabinets. Exterior site inspections should identify combustible storage around structures for removal and disposal.

Fire extinguishers should be placed throughout the facility so there is no more than 75 feet of travel distance from any one point to an extinguisher. These extinguishers should be no larger or smaller than a standard 5-pound size. Extinguishers are to be ABC-rated, dry chemical fire extinguishers (A- Burning Solids, B-Burning Liquids, C-Burning Electrical). Type A water filled extinguishers are to be taken out of service due to electrocution hazards.

Consider installation of a fire sprinkler system.

Interior and exterior doors and room areas should be numbered to be identified quickly during an emergency or to alert authorities. Check with your local police or fire department for suggestions.

Sources of Ignition

Electrical Hazards

Electrical appliances, as well as the building electrical system itself, are sources of ignition. Buildings over 20 years old should be inspected by a licensed electrician to ensure proper fire safety. Many fires caused by an

electrical system failure could have been prevented with regular inspection and maintenance. Over time, wiring connections can become loose causing arcing and fire. Electrical panels can also accumulate dust and dirt through use and circuit breakers need to be periodically checked for proper connections. In order to help prevent the likelihood of an electrical fire, we recommend the following:

- Always have a flashlight handy.
- If your building has fuse boxes, be sure that fuses are of proper amperage and that bypasses (such as pennies in fuse sockets) have not been used.
- If circuit breakers trip, fuses blow, switches get hot or other similar problems occur, shut off the power and immediately call a licensed electrician for inspection and repair.
- Electrical panels require a 36" clear area without storage of any kind. This will protect from sparks in the event of a short circuit or breaker failure and allow easy access to the panel in an emergency.
- All electrical appliances used should bear the Underwriters Laboratory (U.L.) Listed Seal.
- Do not leave clothes dryer running while residence is unoccupied.
- Dryer lint filters and ducts should be cleaned frequently to eliminate lint accumulation.
- Check dryer flex duct, replace plastic with aluminum flex.
- Portable electric heaters that utilize a "glowing element" should not be used.
- Portable electric heaters must have an automatic tip over shut off switch.
- Extension cords are for temporary use only and not a substitute for permanent wiring.
- Extension cords may not be run under carpets, through walls, through concealed spaces, etc.
- Use a surge protected outlet strip in lieu of extension cords for items used on a day-to-day basis (i.e. calculator, coffee pot, pencil sharpener, etc.).
- Electrical cords should be periodically inspected for fraying, cracking, etc.
- Do not overload circuits.
- Do not splice cords.
- Temporary wiring (used for fundraisers or displays, etc.) must

comply with electrical codes. If in doubt, check with an electrician.

- Keep combustible materials well away from electrical appliances.
- Do not substitute indoor equipment (i.e. Christmas lights) for outdoor use.
- Protect computers and office equipment from power fluctuations by using surge protection.
- Replace broken covers on electrical covers and light switches.
- Facilities with lightning protection systems in place need to be inspected at least every 3 years to ensure connections are secure and grounding rods meet proper grounding requirements.

Candles and Incense

Realizing the important symbol of the lighted candle in Catholic Liturgy, we

can look for responsible ways to celebrate the symbol while minimizing the

risk. Please consider the following:

- In general, do not allow the passing of lighted candles from person to person.
Small, well controlled situations such as Baptisms would be an exception.
- All votive and other similar candles must be held securely.
- A container of sand should be available next to candles to extinguish wicks.
- All candles must be located well away from drapes, hangings and other combustible materials.
- All candles should be in a double-insulated container or secured by a noncombustible base.
- Only candles provided by the church are allowed.
- Candles are not to be used on holiday greenery (i.e. Christmas trees, wreaths).
- Lit candles should be used only in churches and chapels and monitored to the extent possible.
- Altar servers should be instructed in proper procedures for lighting candles and incense.
- Be sure incense remnants are completely extinguished prior to disposal. Place remnants in a metal container of sand.

Heating Systems (HVAC)

Proper inspection and maintenance is critical to minimizing fires resulting from heating systems.

- Heating and air conditioning systems should be checked annually by a qualified contractor.
- Furnace filters should be changed as needed.
- Fireplace and wood burning stove chimneys should be professionally cleaned on a periodic basis dependent on use.
- The use of kerosene or other portable liquid fuel type heaters is not allowed indoors due to the potential for CO₂ poisoning.
- Boiler/furnace rooms are not to be used as storage rooms.
- Combustible materials, including paint, flammable liquids, gasoline, or gasoline-powered equipment should not be stored in boiler or furnace rooms. It is also not acceptable to store paint, flammable liquids such as gasoline, or gasoline-powered equipment in boiler/furnace rooms.

Kitchen Operations

Kitchen operations, especially large ones, present significant fire hazards. Items to consider in minimizing the fire hazard include:

- The hood and vent system over cooking surfaces should be cleaned frequently.
- Any automatic extinguishing system should be serviced according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Every kitchen should be equipped with a readily accessible fire extinguisher (appropriate extinguisher type is ABC).
- Know where the main water, gas and electrical shut-offs are and how to use them.
- Chafing dishes and other food warming devices utilizing open flames should be used with caution.
- Liquid fuel, such as alcohol, should be avoided. Gelled fuels are preferable.
- At least one fire extinguisher of the appropriate size and type should be dedicated to each area using chafing dishes and open flame food warmers.
- Post all emergency numbers.
- Have properly equipped first aid kits which are easily accessible.

Smoking

To prevent the possibility of fire related to smoking, we recommend the following:

- If smoking is allowed, provide adequate, non-combustible ashtrays (sand containers), as well as designated smoking areas.
- Dispose of smoking materials with care.
- Do not empty ashtrays into the same cans used for combustible trash.

Hazardous, Flammable and Combustible Materials

For most operations, hazard materials usually include flammable and Combustible liquids, such as gasoline, oil base solvents, thinners, and spray

paint. In order to minimize fire hazard due to these materials, we recommend the following:

- Refer to your Hazcom program and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS/SDS) for handling instructions.
- Minimize storage of flammable and combustible liquids by purchasing only as much as you need for one use.
- Fuel, such as gasoline, should not be stored on premises unless absolutely necessary. If so, it must be stored in an approved type 2 fuel can.
- Rags soaked with oils, flammable or combustible liquids require special handling. In order to help avoid a fire caused by spontaneous combustion, such rags must be stored alone in a covered, metal container.
- Flammable or combustible liquids must be used in a well ventilated area away from sources of ignition.
- Never use gasoline or other flammable liquids as cleaning solvents.
- School science labs present significant chemical exposures. Please refer to your locations Hazcom program for specific chemical hazard information.
- Old chemicals must be disposed in an environmentally sound manner.
Many old chemicals may be hazardous and/or flammable and some may be unstable. Please check with your local fire department, recycling center or D.E.Q. for proper disposal.
- All chemicals must be clearly labeled. MSDS/SDS must be available upon request or in the event of an emergency.

- Store combustible materials (i.e. cardboard, lumber, dry brush) away from structures to discourage arson.

FIRE REMEDIATION

What to Do After a Fire

- Limit movement in the home to prevent soot particles from being embedded into upholstery and carpets.
- Keep hands clean so as not to further soil upholstery, walls and woodwork.
- Place clean towels or old linens on rugs, upholstery and carpet traffic areas.
- If electricity is off, empty freezer and refrigerator and prop doors open.
- Clean and protect chrome with light coating of petroleum jelly or oil.
- Wash houseplants on both sides of leaves.
- Change HVAC filter.
- Tape double layers of cheesecloth over air registers.

What NOT to Do After a Fire

- Attempt to wash any walls or painted surfaces or shampoo carpet or upholstery without contacting a professional restoration contractor
- Attempt to clean any electrical appliances that may have been close to fire, heat or water without consulting an authorized repair service
- Use any canned or packaged food or beverages that may have been stored near the fire, heat or water
- Turn on ceiling fixtures if ceiling is wet. The wiring may be damaged.
- Send garments to an ordinary dry cleaner. Improper cleaning may set smoke odor.