

Conducting a Home Fire Safety Inspection

Almost all home fires and the deaths that result from them are preventable. With the right planning, these tragedies can be avoided. Here is a simple list to help you conduct your own home fire safety inspection.

1. Do you have smoke detectors? A minimum of one smoke detector in each sleeping area is necessary for safety. In addition, have one detector in the hallway outside the sleeping areas and one detector on each floor. Change the batteries when you adjust your clocks for time changes. Test detectors monthly.
2. **DISCUSS AND REGULARLY PRACTICE YOUR HOME FIRE ESCAPE PLAN.**
3. Make sure your windows are free of obstructions. The only type of home security window bars that are safe and legal in Milpitas are those which have a quick release opening mechanism that can be operated from **inside** the home.
4. If your home is two stories or higher, do you have an escape ladder?
5. Are all electrical sockets and switches protected with a cover plate?
6. Are all appliances clean and in good working order?
7. Have all items, such as plastic containers, been removed from the oven?
8. Remove any thin-wired extension cords. Use only strip-style, multi-plug adaptors with a thick cord. Assure these are equipped with a breaker switch.
9. Inspect all cords to appliances, lights, televisions, etc. and assure the cords are undamaged, are not frayed and are tightly wired to the plug portion of the cord.
10. Assure all hallways, doorways, stairs and walkways are always clear of obstructions.
11. Do you have a fire extinguisher? Assure your extinguisher meets the following minimum standards:
 - a. It should be a dry-chemical type, rated minimum 2A 10BC
 - b. If it is more than one year old, assure it has been serviced by a professional company within the past 12 months
 - c. Does it have metal handles?
 - d. Does it have a hose?
 - e. Is the pressure gauge in the green zone?
 - f. Remember: Home fire extinguishers should only be used for small, confined fires, such as a pan on the stove, that ignite while you are

present. Attack the fire from no closer than 6 feet and make sure the fire never gets between you and the way out. ALWAYS EVACUATE THE STRUCTURE AND CALL 911 FROM A NEIGHBORS HOUSE AFTER USING YOUR EXINGUISHER, EVEN IF YOU ARE SURE THE FIRE IS OUT. Let the experts check to make sure everything is safe.

12. Are all cleaning products and medicines stored out of the reach of children?
13. Assure all flammable liquids, pesticides and poisons are stored outside in a lockable container.
14. Make sure there is a 4-foot clear space around water heaters, furnaces and fireplaces.
15. Has your fireplace been cleaned and equipped with a spark arrestor screen?
16. Assure no one ever empties ashtrays into an inside wastebasket. Ashtrays should only be emptied into an exterior metal trashcan with a tightly fitting lid.
17. Assure newspapers, trash, weeds and brush in and around your home are picked-up and disposed of regularly.
18. Have your furnace, clothes dryer (checked for excess lint) and water heater checked annually by a licensed professional. This is well worth an hour of their time.

This list is just a beginning. Home fire safety is not a once a year thought. The safest homes are those in which everyone is constantly watching for fire hazards. For further information, contact your Milpitas Fire Department at (408) 586-2810.