

Candle Fire Safety

What you should know about fire safety while using candles.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 41 percent of home **candle fires** begin in the bedroom, causing 24 percent of the deaths resulting from these fires. A special study found that the candles were being used for light in one-third of the fatal home candle fires, generally because power to the home was off. In Washington State, there were 216 fires started by candles in 2004 that caused over \$4.5 million in damages and two fire deaths.

To keep your home safe, use care and caution when burning candles.

1 Always keep a burning candle within sight.

- Use candles only in rooms where there is a responsible adult awake to control and oversee the flame. Extinguish all candles when leaving a room or before going to sleep. Do not use candles in sleeping areas.
- Keep candles away from items that can catch fire, such as clothing, books, papers, Christmas trees, decorations, window blinds and curtains.
- Keep candles away from high-traffic locations where they can be easily knocked over, including any area accessible to children or pets.
- Place candles on stable surfaces in sturdy holders that grip the candle securely and won't tip over. Place candles in candle holders that can't burn and are big enough to collect dripping wax.
- Extinguish taper and pillar candles when they burn to within two inches of the holder, and votive and container candles before the last half-inch of wax begins to melt. Avoid candles with combustible items embedded in them.
- Use extreme caution if you carry a lit candle, holding it well away from clothing and any combustibles that may be near the path along which you walk, and avoid loose, flowing clothing that is not flame-resistant. Never touch or move a votive or container candle when the wax is liquid.

2 Candles & children:

- Keep candles up high out of reach of children.
- Never leave a child unattended in a room with a candle. A child should not sleep in a room with a lit candle.
- Don't allow children or teens to have candles in their bedrooms.
- Store candles, matches and lighters up high and out of children's sight and reach, preferably in a locked cabinet.

3 During power outages:

- Flashlights and other battery-powered lights are much safer light sources than candles during a power failure.
- Try to avoid carrying a lit candle. Don't use a lit candle when searching for items in a confined space.
- Never use a candle for a light when checking pilot lights or fueling equipment such as a kerosene heater or lantern. The flame may ignite the fumes.

References: *National Fire Protection Association, on line at <http://www.nfpa.org/>; The National Candle Association, on line at: <http://www.candles.org/UseAndSafety/candlesafetytips.htm>; Office of the State Fire Marshal, 2004 Fire in Washington Annual Report*