2011 Fire Prevention Week tips from the National Fire Prevention Association.

Home Fires

• One home structure fire was reported every 87 seconds in 2009.
• On average, seven people died in home fires every day. Adults 65 and over face the highest risk of fire death.
• In 2009, U.S. fire departments responded to 362,500 home structure fires. These fires caused 12,650 civilian injuries, 2,565 civilian deaths, $7.6 billion in direct damage.

Escape Planning

• According to an NFPA survey, less than one-fourth of Americans have both developed and practiced a home fire escape plan (PDF, 640 KB).
• Almost three-quarters of Americans do have an escape plan; however, less than half actually practiced it.
• One-third of Americans households who made and estimate they thought they would have at least six minutes before a fire in their home would become life threatening. The time available is often less. And only eight percent said their first thought on hearing a smoke alarm would be to get out!

Smoke Alarms

• Roughly two-thirds of home fire deaths happen in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. About one in five smoke alarm failures was due to dead batteries.
• Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home fires in half.
• In fires considered large enough to activate the smoke alarm, hardwired alarms operated 91 percent of the time, while battery powered alarms operated only 75 percent of the time.

Home Fire Sprinklers

• Automatic fire sprinkler systems cut the risk of dying in a home fire by about 80 percent.
• Home fire sprinklers can contain and may even extinguish a fire in less time than it would take the fire department to arrive on the scene.
• Sprinklers are highly effective because they react so quickly in a fire. They reduce the risk of death or injury from a fire because they dramatically reduce the heat, flames and smoke produced, allowing people time to evacuate the home.

Cooking

• Cooking equipment is the leading cause of home structure fires and associated injuries, and was tied for the third leading cause of home fire deaths.
• Unattended cooking was by far the leading cause of these fires.
• Households using electric ranges have a higher risk of fires than those using gas ranges.
• Children under five face a higher risk of non-fire burns associated with cooking than being burned in a cooking fire.
• Nearly half (45 percent) of microwave oven injuries seen at emergency rooms in 2009 were scalds.
• U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 155,400 cooking-related home fires each year between 2005-2009, causing an average of 390 deaths, 4,800 injuries and $771 million in direct property damage.

Heating

• Fires involving heating equipment peak in December, January and February, as do deaths from these fires. Overall, homes fires and home fire deaths are also more common in the cooler months of the year.

• Heating equipment was the second leading cause of all reported home fires and home fire deaths.

• The leading factor contributing to heating equipment fires was failure to clean, principally creosote from solid fueled heating equipment, primarily chimneys.

• Half of home heating fire deaths resulted from fires caused by heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattresses or bedding.

• U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 64,100 heating-related home fires each year between 2005-2009, causing an average of 560 deaths, 1,620 injuries and $904 million in direct property damage.

Smoking Materials

• The risk of dying in a home structure fire caused by smoking materials rises with age.

• In recent years, Canada and the United States have required that all cigarettes sold must be “fire safe,” that is, to have reduced ignition strength and be less likely to start fires.

• U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 18,900 smoking-related home fires each year between 2005-2009, causing an average of 660 deaths, 1,270 injuries and $492 million in direct property damage.

Electrical

• 41 percent of home electrical fires involved electrical distribution or lighting equipment.

• 53 percent of home electrical fires involved other known types of equipment, including ranges, washers/dryers, fans and space heaters.

• During 2005-2009, electrical distribution and lighting equipment was involved in the ignition of 23,400 home structure fires, on average, per year. These fires caused an average of 390 deaths, 970 injuries and $822 million in direct property damage.

Candles

• On average, there are 35 home candle fires reported per day.

• Roughly two-fifths of these fires started in the bedroom.

• More than half of all candle fires start when things that can burn are too close to the candle.

• During 2005-2009, candles caused an average of 12,900 home fires, 140 home fire deaths, 1,040 home fire injuries and $471 million in direct property damage.