



The Midland Fire Department would like to remind you to please take fire safety seriously. An unusual increase in structure fires within the city has occurred recently. Although these fires had numerous and varied causes, several factors deserve attention.

Recreational Fires / Grills / Chimineas: Caution should be taken when disposing of ashes from recreational fires or grills. Place ashes in a steel (not paper or plastic) container, and mix thoroughly with water. Remember that embers may be present in ashes for several days after the fire. Place the container a safe distance from the house. Do not place containers in the garage or next to the house. Improper disposal of ashes has resulted in major damage to several city residences.

Owners of clay or ceramic Chimineas should follow manufacturer's safety precautions. These include filling the bowl with sand or pea stone to within 3" to 4" of the lower lip of the mouth. This insulates the pottery from the fire, and reduces the risk of cracking. Never leave the fire unattended, always have a fire extinguisher on hand, and NEVER PUT WATER ON THE FIRE! Applying water to the fire will cause the pottery to crack, spilling the contents of the fire to the surface below.

Placing a Chiminea or outdoor fire place on a deck is not recommended, but if you must, place a fire resistant mat or tile beneath the unit for added safety. Never place a Chiminea or grill beneath a roof overhang. If there is a fire flare up, the flames can quickly spread to the house. Outdoor fire places of steel or cast iron construction are preferable to pottery types, and less likely to pose a danger to structures.

For more information on recreational fires and fire requirements, visit the City of Midland Home Page at <http://www.midland-mi.org>, then navigate to "City Government" and click on "Fire Department".

Home Projects: Painting and staining materials containing organic substances such as linseed oil or flax oil can be fire starters. Rags and cleaning material should be spread out to dry, and then placed in a steel container away from the structure prior to final disposal. Latex paint products are stable and not a major fire concern.

If you are a do-it-yourself individual who plans to insulate your ceiling or attic space, there are several things you need to be aware of. Insulation should not be placed on top of lights or come in contact with heating appliance exhaust vents or stacks, unless the assembly is UL rated for direct contact. Several local fires have occurred when cellulose insulation was improperly installed. These fires are difficult to detect because they are above living spaces where there are no smoke detectors. The fire is often well developed before the home owner is aware there is a problem.

Safe Appliances: When a new appliance is purchased (even an inexpensive one), take time to fill out the product registration / warrantee form and mail it in. Many fires occur in appliances that have been recalled. You will be notified by the manufacturer of any recall, but only if you send the registration / warrantee form in! Something as simple as a malfunctioning dehumidifier or box fan can start a house fire.

Household furnaces and gas fired hot water heaters should have annual maintenance and cleaning. Do not place combustible materials within three feet of hot water heaters, electrical panels, or furnaces. Storage of flammable and combustible materials in furnace rooms is not recommended. Do not allow a buildup of dust and cobwebs. Remember, the furnace and hot water heater are two of the most used appliances in any residence but often get little or no maintenance until they break down!

Electricity: Take steps to correct any electrical problems in the house. Constantly dimming lights, tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses are warning signs that should be taken very seriously. Defective appliances, outlets, lights, and switches should be repaired or replaced. Multi outlet surge suppressors should be used instead of extension cords whenever possible. An electrical cord that is warm to the touch may be an indication of overload or a defective cord. Take care not to overload individual branch circuits.

When purchasing a house, have the wiring inspected by a professional. The average prospective home owner has little idea of what to look for when evaluating the electrical system in a house. Post purchase repairs and upgrades can be costly, and sub standard wiring may cost property and lives.

Candles: Be very cautious when using candles, especially around children and pets. Candles have been knocked over by pets and children, causing injuries and igniting furnishings. Place candles away from flammable and combustible materials and never leave them unattended. Many of the candles manufactured today have a tendency to flare unexpectedly. This may ignite nearby items such as curtains. There have been numerous recalls of decorative candles because the containers holding the candles have themselves ignited. Flaring votive candles have been known to crack their glass containers, spilling the burning contents onto the surface below. Place a ceramic dish beneath the candle for an added measure of safety.

Cooking: Cooking is the cause of many home fires. Ovens should be kept clean. Combustible materials such as cereal boxes and paper items should not be placed on, near or in burners and ovens. Care should be taken not to leave cooking operations unattended. Try to extinguish cooking fires by using an ABC fire extinguisher if you are physically capable of doing so, or cover the pan if you can and remove the heat source. Never put water on a grease fire! This may facilitate a boil-over explosion, spreading hot, flaming grease throughout the kitchen. Do not take chances with your life. Remember most clothing today is composed of manmade materials that will ignite and burn readily.

Smoke / CO Detectors: Smoke and carbon monoxide detector maintenance is a priority! Working detectors save lives. Every residence should have a minimum of one smoke detector on each level of the house and outside each sleeping area. There should also be a minimum of one (1), three pound ABC fire extinguisher on each level in a readily accessible location. The City of Midland Fire Department has a limited supply of smoke detectors and fire extinguishers available free of charge to those in need. Inquiries should be made through our business phone line at 989-837-3410.

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