

Spring & Summer Fire Safety Tips!

Spring Cleaning

In the House

Test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, change batteries immediately if needed. For more information check out our section on smoke alarm maintenance & carbon monoxide detector maintenance.

Check your fire extinguishers. For more information, check our section on fire extinguisher information.

Check for overloaded or damaged extension cords, replace where needed.

Ensure you have an emergency preparedness kit in case of incidents such as power outages and flooding.

Practice your families fire escape plan so everyone knows what to do in case of an emergency

Windows should be checked to ensure they open and close properly, in case they are needed as an exit

Properly store household chemicals and never mix cleaning agents

Recycle: Get rid of old newspapers, magazines and junk mail. These items tend to pile up and can greatly contribute to the severity and spread of fire.

Check and clean filters above stove.

Pull refrigerator out and vacuum or dust the coils.

Always keep stairs and landings clear for safe evacuation in event of an emergency.



Around the house

Make sure your address numbers are up and visible from the street.

Maintain a clear 'fire zone' of 10' around structures.

Check outdoor electrical outlets and other electrical appliances for animal nests and to ensure proper wiring.

Keep 100' of garden hose with an attached nozzle connected and ready for use.

Remove leaves and trash from carports and garages: Combustible materials are dangerous if they are exposed to heated automobile components, especially under the vehicle.

Clean up and properly store paints, pool and yard chemicals.

Check fuels containers for leaks and make sure they are properly stored.

Let power equipment sit for approximately 30 minutes before placing it inside to be sure there is no possibility of fire.

Some municipalities do not allow open air burning. Always check with your local fire department for questions, instructions and permits.



BBQ Tips

All barbeque grills must only be used outdoors — using grills indoors or in enclosed spaces is not only a fire hazard, but it exposes occupants to toxic gasses and potential asphyxiation.

Always position the grill well away from combustible objects — buildings, fences, deck railings and landscaping can easily and quickly ignite.

Get your grill cleaned and serviced. Check all propane tanks and lines for leaks and damage.

Never leave a lit grill unattended.

Always use long handled grilling utensils and heat resistant oven mitts to avoid exposure burns from heat and flames.

Periodically remove grease build-up in catch trays to prevent it from igniting.

Keep a garden hose nearby, connected and ready for use in case of a fire.

The Fire Department in Pittsfield wants to ensure you have an enjoyable and safe summer. Below are some general fire safety tips that will help your family enjoy all that summer can offer.



- Do not allow children to get near fireworks, stoves, or grills. Make sure that all flammable and combustible materials are out of their reach. Never allow them to play with matches, candles, or lighters.
- Bring a fire extinguisher or fire blanket to your outdoor trip. This way, you can easily extinguish fire before it grows out of hand. Fire accidents can happen anytime and it always pays to be prepared.
- Before you use a grill, check first the connection between the propane tank and fuel line to see if this is not blocked. See to it that you do not overfill the propane tank.
- Douse hot coals with plenty of water before disposing of them. Never put them inside plastic, paper or wooden trash bins or containers.
- During picnics or camping trips, avoid building campfires. If you do build one, make sure you keep it small and that you douse it with water to put it out completely. Never leave the camping area without putting out the campfire. Check with your local fire department, municipality or Ministry of Natural Resource to ensure there is not a fire ban in effect.
- Inspect fire equipment at home. Ensure your fire extinguisher is in top condition. If you see anything suspicious like a leak in the nozzle, have it repaired or checked by a professional immediately.
- Double check plugs and switches at home before you leave. If you are going on a trip or picnic at be sure that everything is unplugged and turned off before you leave the house.
- Formulate an escape route for the house or cottage. Practice fire drills regularly at least twice a year. Leave emergency numbers near the telephone.
- Use barbecue grills away from the house, from the tent, or from anything that can easily catch fire.
- When checking in at a hotel, B&B, motel or renting a seasonal property, do not forget to consider the fire safety of the place. Examine if there are fire exits, firefighting equipment, working smoke detectors and clear signage of the escape route.
- When using a lawnmower, never fuel it while it is still hot. Give it a few minutes to cool down.
- If outside and your clothes catch fire, use the **STOP, DROP** and **ROLL** method. Use a fire extinguisher to put out a small fire that is not yet spreading. Call the fire department immediately.



Seasonal Property Fire Safety

(this includes but is not limited to cottages, cabins, motorhomes/rvs, boats & houseboats etc.)

- Test smoke alarms at least monthly or each time you return to your seasonal home. Pack a new smoke alarm and extra smoke alarm batteries in case they need replacement.
- Install and ensure carbon monoxide alarms in your seasonal home if it has a fuel-burning appliance.
- Develop and practice a home fire escape plan to ensure everyone knows what to do if the smoke alarm sounds.
- Know the telephone number for the local fire department and your seasonal home's emergency sign number, in case of emergency.
- Clean barbecues before using them. Keep an eye on lit barbecues and ensure all combustibles, as well as children and pets are kept well away from them. Fires can happen when barbecues are left unattended.
- Keep barbecue lighters and matches out of sight and reach of children.
- Remember to bring a flashlight with extra batteries.
- Check heating appliances and chimneys before using them.
- Check with your local fire department, municipality, or Ministry of Natural Resources to determine whether open air burning is permitted before having a campfire or burning brush. If open burning is allowed, fires should be built on bare soil or on exposed rock. Remove leaves and twigs from around the fire to keep it from spreading. Always keep a bucket of water, sand, or even a shovel close by and supervise the fire at all times.
- If you must smoke, do so outside. Keep a large can with water nearby so cigarette butts can be safely discarded. If you drink, do so responsibly. Tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption are contributing factors in many fires and can lead to serious injuries.
- Burn candles in sturdy candleholders that will not tip and are covered with a glass shade. When you go out, blow out!

Fireworks Safety:



To minimize the risk of fire and burn injury, the fire department does not recommend family fireworks or informal neighborhood displays.

The fire department recommends attending public fireworks displays hosted by your municipality or other responsible organization.

If you still choose to have a family fireworks or an informal neighbourhood display, check with your local fire department or State Fire Marshal about permissible regulations regarding fireworks. Here are some important safety tips to be followed:

- Appoint a responsible person to be in charge. Only adults who are aware of the hazards and essential safety precautions should handle and discharge fireworks.
- Carefully read and follow the label directions on fireworks packaging.
- Always keep a water hose or pail of water close by when discharging fireworks.
- Discharge fireworks well away from combustible materials like buildings, trees and dry grass.
- Keep onlookers a safe distance away, upwind from the area where fireworks are discharged.
- Light only one firework at a time and only when they are on the ground. Never try to light a firework in your hand or re-light dud fireworks. For dud fireworks, it is best to wait 30 minutes and soak them in a bucket of water. Dispose of them in a metal container.
- Discharge fireworks only if wind conditions do not create a safety hazard.
- Keep sparklers away from children. Sparklers burn extremely hot and can ignite clothing, cause blindness and result in severe burns. As the sparkler wire remains hot for some minutes after burnout, it should be immediately soaked in water to avoid injury.
- If someone gets burned, run cool water over the wound for three to five minutes and seek medical attention, if necessary.



Campfire Safety Tips

All it takes is one spark for things to go wrong. A carelessly abandoned campfire or a campfire built without safe clearance can turn a small fire into a dangerous and fast-moving blaze. Be sure to build your campfire in a way that does not endanger anyone or the surrounding forest. Enjoy a safe campfire by following these campfire safety tips:

- Check with local authorities on open-air burning restrictions and follow local burning regulations. Keep up-to-date on fire bans in the area.
- Never build a campfire on a windy day. Sparks or embers from the fire could travel quite a distance setting an unintentional fire.
- Watch the wind direction to ensure sparks aren't getting on flammable materials. Put the fire out if wind changes begin to cause concern
- Build campfires where they will not spread; well away from tents, trailers, dry grass, leaves, overhanging tree branches or any other combustible.
- Build campfires in fire pits provided or on bare rock or sand, if no fire pit is provided.
- Maintain a 2 to 3.5 metre (6 – 10 foot) clearance around your campfire.
- Build a campfire surround with rocks to contain your campfire. Be aware that rocks obtained from the river may explode due to moisture in the rock becoming superheated by the campfire.
- Use crumpled paper and/or kindling to start a fire rather than using flammable liquids.
- Never use gasoline as an aid to starting a campfire. If a fire starter is required, use only proper lighting fluid and use the lighting fluid sparingly. NEVER PUT IT ON AN OPEN FLAME since the fire can ignite the stream of lighting fluid and the flame will travel up the stream igniting the container in your hand and causing serious injury. Once the lighting fluid has been applied to the firewood, allow a few minutes for the explosive vapours to disperse before lighting. Remove the lighting fluid container a safe distance away before lighting the campfire.
- Secure all lighters and matches and keep them out of children's reach.
- Keep campfires to a small, manageable size no more than 1 metre (3 feet) high by 1 metre (3 feet) in diameter and don't let it get out of hand.
- Don't burn garbage in your campfire. The smell is unpleasant for you and your neighbours, and may attract animals to your campsite.
- Keep all combustible materials, including flammable liquids, propane cylinders, lighting fluid, etc. away from the campfire.
- Stack extra wood upwind and away from the campfire so that sparks from the campfire cannot ignite your woodpile. Have sufficient wood on hand to eliminate the need to leave your campsite to restock.

- Never leave campfires unattended. Ensure that a responsible adult is monitoring the campfire at all times. Supervise children around campfires at all times and never allow horseplay near or involving the campfire, such as jumping over a campfire. Do not allow children to run around near a campfire.
- Closely supervise children while roasting treats over a campfire. A flaming marshmallow can easily ignite a child's clothing. A heated metal skewer can be a burn hazard, as well as a puncture hazard.
- Loose clothing can easily catch fire. Never reach into a campfire to rearrange pieces of wood.
- Teach children how to STOP, DROP and ROLL should their clothing catch on fire. Teach children to cool a burn with cool running water for 3 – 5 minutes.
- Keep plenty of water and a shovel around to douse the fire when you're done. Use caution when applying water to the campfire. Once the water has been applied, stir the dampened coals and douse it again with water. As an added precaution, shovel sand or dirt to cover the dampened coals to smother any remaining embers.
- As little as 1 second contact with a 70°C (158°F) campfire can cause 3rd degree, full thickness burns.
- The average campfire can get as hot as 500°C (932°F) in as little as 3 hrs.
- The majority of children are burned the morning after a fire from coming into contact with hot ashes or embers.
- A campfire left to burn itself out or put out with sand only, was still 100°C (212°F) eight hours later. The buried coals and embers retain their heat underground like an oven. There is also a risk that the fire may spontaneously re-ignite. A child may mistake the pile of sand or dirt as a sand castle and attempt to play in it. The temperature, less than 10 cm (4") below the surface of the sand or dirt can be as high as 300 °C (572°F).
- A campfire put out with water is reduced to 50°C (122°F) within 10 minutes of applying the water and reduced to 10°C (50°F) after 8 hrs. **The safest way to extinguish a campfire is with water.**



Storm/Natural Disaster Safety Tips

Natural disasters can have a devastating effect on you and your home. Use the following safety tips to help protect yourself, your family and your home from the potential threat of fire during or after a summer storm. You can greatly reduce your chances of becoming a fire casualty by being able to identify potential hazards and following the outlined safety tips.

Some Types of Fire-Related Hazards Present During and After a Summer Storm

- Lightning associated with thunderstorms generates a variety of fire hazards. The power of lightning's electrical charge and intense heat can electrocute on contact, splitting trees and causing fires.
- Pools of water and even appliances can be electrically charged.
- Appliances that have been exposed to water can short and become a fire hazard.
- Generators are often used during power outages. Generators that are not properly used and maintained can be very hazardous.

Chemical Safety

- Look for combustible liquids like gasoline, lighter fluid, and paint thinner that may have spilled. Thoroughly clean the spill and place containers in a well-ventilated area.
- Keep combustible liquids away from heat sources.

Electrical Safety

- If your home has sustained flood or water damage, and you can safely get to the main breaker or fuse box, turn off the power.
- Assume all wires on the ground are electrically charged. This includes cable TV feeds.
- Be aware of and avoid downed utility lines. Report downed or damaged power lines to the utility company or emergency services.
- Remove standing water, wet carpets and furnishings. Air dry your home with good ventilation before restoring power.

- Have a licensed electrician check your home for damage.

Gas Safety

- Smell and listen for leaky gas connections. If you believe there is a gas leak, immediately leave the house and leave the door(s) open.
- Never strike a match. Any size flame can spark an explosion.
- Before turning the gas back on, have the gas system checked by a professional.

Generator Safety

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions and guidelines when using generators.
- Use a generator or other fuel-powered machines outside the home. CO fumes are odorless and can quickly overwhelm you indoors.
- Use the appropriate sized and type power cords to carry the electric load. Overloaded cords can overheat and cause fires.
- Never run cords under rugs or carpets where heat might build up or damage to a cord may go unnoticed.
- Never connect generators to another power source such as power lines. The reverse flow of electricity or 'backfeed' can electrocute an unsuspecting utility worker.

Heating Safety

- Kerosene heaters may not be legal in your area and should only be used where approved by authorities.
- Do not use the kitchen oven range to heat your home. In addition to being a fire hazard, it can be a source of toxic fumes.
- Alternative heaters need their space. Keep anything combustible at least 3 feet away.
- Make sure your alternative heaters have 'tip switches.' These 'tip switches' are designed to automatically turn off the heater in the event they tip over.
- Only use the type of fuel recommended by the manufacturer and follow suggested guidelines.
- Never refill a space heater while it is operating or still hot.
- Refuel heaters only outdoors.
- Make sure wood stoves are properly installed, and at least 3 feet away from combustible materials. Ensure they have the proper floor support and adequate ventilation.
- Use a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to prevent sparks from igniting nearby carpets, furniture or other combustible items.

and Remember ...

- Always use a flashlight - not a candle - for emergency lighting.

- Some smoke alarms may be dependent on your home's electrical service and could be inoperative during a power outage. Check to see if your smoke alarm uses a back-up battery and install a new battery at least once a year.
- Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home and inside and outside of sleeping areas.
- All smoke alarms should be tested monthly. All batteries should be replaced with new ones at least once a year.
- If there is a fire hydrant near your home, keep it clear of debris for easy access by the fire department.