

Statistical flare-up

Between 1993 and 1997, candles caused an annual average of 8,690 home fires, responsible for averages of 104 civilian deaths, 948 injuries, and \$126 million in property damage each year.

Alarming, the latest statistics show that candle fires are on the rise — with 9,930 reported in 1996 and 11,600 in 1997, the highest total in the 18 years for which statistics are available.

Reducing the risk

- ▶ Never leave a burning candle unattended. Extinguish all candles when you leave the room or go to bed.
- ▶ Fire experts discourage the use of candles in bedrooms, where almost half of all home candle fires start. If you must burn candles in the bedroom, keep them away from bedding, curtains and blinds, wallpaper, upholstered furniture, piles of clothing, and newspapers and magazines, and monitor them carefully.
- ▶ Keep candles at least three feet (one meter) away from anything that can burn.
- ▶ Keep candles away from flammable liquids.
- ▶ Don't place lit candles in windows or near doorways, where drafts could bring combustibles in contact with the flame.

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Safe candle use

- ▶ Use candle holders that
 - ▶ are sturdy,
 - ▶ won't tip over easily,
 - ▶ are made from a material that can't burn,
 - ▶ are large enough to collect dripping wax.
- ▶ Place candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface — away from edges and any place where they could be knocked over by children or pets.
- ▶ Light candles carefully. Keep your hair and loose clothing away from the flame.
- ▶ Keep candle wicks trimmed to one-quarter inch.
- ▶ Extinguish candles when they burn down to within two inches of their holder or any decorative material.
- ▶ Extinguish candles carefully, using a long-handled candle snuffer or a soft, directed breath. Do not leave the room until wicks have stopped glowing.

Candles and children

Just less than 10 percent of home candle fires are started by children playing.

- ▶ Don't let children play with candles or dripping wax — or with combustible materials near candles.
- ▶ Never leave a child unattended in a room with a burning candle.
- ▶ Don't allow children or teens to burn candles in their bedrooms.
- ▶ Store candles, matches, and lighters up high and out of children's sight and reach, preferably in a locked cabinet.

