

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a multi-story building engulfed in a large fire. Thick, dark grey smoke billows upwards from the flames, partially obscuring the building's facade. The fire is concentrated in the central part of the building, with bright orange and yellow flames visible. The overall scene is dramatic and emphasizes the danger of home fires.

FIRE PREVENTION IN THE HOME

SAFETY GUIDELINE



For enquiries or complaints
on fire hazards
please call

2723 8787

or contact any fire station

FIRE PREVENTION IN THE HOME

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Preface

Hong Kong is a very densely populated city with buildings closely packed together. When a fire starts, it can spread easily and quickly, thus causing great disasters.

Though we have a well-trained fire brigade which is equipped with modern fire appliances and equipment to help minimizing the loss of lives and property, every year there are still numerous fire accidents caused by people in their homes through carelessness or ignorance of basic fire safety precautions. These fires often ruin homes and bring about tragic loss of family members and property.

In order to safeguard our lives and property, we must be alert to all possibilities of fire hazards and take preventive measures to make our home safe.



Fire Precaution in the Home

The following paragraphs describe in detail the steps that you can take to protect your home from fire in areas including living room, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, corridor, staircase, roof, etc.; and all items which may cause fire hazards.

You can protect your home and property from fire if you comply with these preventive measures.



Living Rooms

You must pay special attention to the fittings and furniture such as curtains' upholstered furniture and electrical appliances placed in the living room.

Foam rubber or fabric-mounted furniture

Ashtray should be used while smoking on a sofa or a chair. Do not leave cigarette ends on the sofa or the chair. You should pay special attention to foam rubber or fabric-mounted sofas or chairs because they can be easily ignited by a lighted cigarette end, thus causing a fire and giving out toxic gases and smoke.

Matches and Lighters

Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of the reach of children.

Ashtrays

Ashtrays must be big enough, properly shaped to prevent cigarettes from rolling off to the ground or other combustible materials to cause a fire. Lighted smoking materials must always be properly extinguished before disposal.

TV and Radio Sets

Allow sufficient space behind your TV and radio set and do not block the ventilation openings to prevent internal heat build-up. It makes good sense to totally disconnect the TV set from the electrical outlet when not in use.

Air-conditioners

Before installing an air-conditioner, examine its electrical rating to ensure it will not overload an existing circuit. A clogged filter will result in an overloaded motor. Make sure therefore that your air-conditioner is regularly maintained and cleaned.



Electrical appliances and electric circuits

Choose certified electrical appliances. Pay attention to electric circuits and circuit protection. Avoid overloading electrical circuits and plugging more than one adapter into the same socket. Also, never connect too many plugs to the same socket. Don't use sockets with cracks, signs of overheating (e.g. discolouration, being burnt black or distortion) or loosening.

If a fuse blows or a circuit breaker trips, there may be too many appliances operating on that one circuit. If no appliances are operating and a fuse blows or a circuit breaker trips, there is likely to be a fault in the wiring, which should be investigated without delay by a qualified electrician.



Electric wiring

Extension cords and the cords of lamps and appliances should not be abused. Avoid locating them where they will be subject to foot traffic or the weight of furniture. Do not run them under rugs and carpets. Always handle power points, switches and plugs with dry hands. Make a habit of checking all the installations regularly, or having them checked at least once a year.

Lighting facilities

Inspect fixed electrical lighting installations regularly to ensure that they are fault-free and in working order. If abnormal conditions are noted in any lighting installation, such as overheating, blinking, unsteady glaring, etc., switch it off and call a registered electrical worker to inspect it. Lighting installations not in use should be switched off; while those in use should be kept away from flammable materials and heat should be allowed to dissipate.



Fishbowls

Water pumps and filters inside the fishbowls should be cleaned regularly to prevent fire caused by overheating or short-circuit.



Kitchens

The kitchen is the place to store fuel, matches and cooking oil. The comparatively large number of gas and electrical appliances installed and combustible substances stored in the kitchen make it more accident-prone than other places in the home. Therefore, you must be more alert when you are working in the kitchen so as to prevent fire and safeguard the lives of your family members.

Around the stove

Make sure that the stove is kept clear of odds and ends such as waste papers and other combustibles. The stove should be regularly cleaned to prevent grease from accumulating.

Fuel

Store cooking fuel such as liquefied petroleum gas and kerosene (not more than one container at any time) well away from the stove and sources of heat. Never fill a kerosene stove or heater when it is alight. Kerosene must be stored in metal containers, tightly closed.

Cooking

Take care when cooking. Beware of burning and boiling over. Do not leave your cooking unattended, especially for pans of fat or cooking oil. Check and clean all your stoves frequently.

Gas appliances

Installation should be carried out by qualified technicians. Make sure that the area is well ventilated. If you suspect a gas leak:

- Extinguish all naked flames.
- Do not use the telephone or operate any electrical switches.
- Open all windows and doors wide to disperse the gas.
- Do not touch the gas appliances in case you accidentally operate the ignition switch. Instead, turn off the gas supply at the pressure regulator switch. Disconnect the regulator from the cylinder if possible.



- If the gas leak is serious, or if you are unsure for any reason, leave the premises at once and notify your neighbours to evacuate, but do not press any doorbells. Leave the building by the stairs, dial 999 and notify the Fire Services Department, and call your gas supply company's emergency number.
- Do not re-connect the gas cylinder until all necessary steps have been taken to prevent gas from escaping again.
- Your gas installation, including gas cylinder and appliances, shall not be used again until it has been checked for safety by your gas supply company.



Refrigerators

The principal fire hazard lies in allowing a heavy build-up of dust and lint over the motor, compressor, fan and coils. Such a condition results in overloading and possible breakdown, with fire possibly spreading to foamed plastic insulation within the unit walls and other plastic components. Unplug the refrigerator and get rid of the dust from the motor compressor area at regular intervals. Older refrigerators which exhaust air towards the rear should be spaced away from the wall to allow for unrestricted flow of air.



Ironing

The overheating of left-on-and-forgotten irons would often set scorched clothes on fire and thus becomes dangerous, especially if the ironing board is made of wood and covered with a cloth.

Aerosol sprays

The aerosol spray is packed in a pressurised container that may explode if exposed to excessive heat.

- Do not use excessive amount of pesticide.
- Do not spray near naked flame or other ignited sources.
- Do not place aerosol sprays in direct sunlight or near any heat source.
- Always keep aerosol sprays in a cool dry place.



Burning joss sticks and joss papers

Joss sticks and papers should be burnt inside a metal container, clear of combustibles such as waste papers and carton boxes. All ashes must be extinguished thoroughly before disposal.



Bedrooms

The majority of home-fire deaths occur in bedrooms. Most fires happen at night after the family has gone to bed. Sometimes people are trapped and burned to death, but most deaths occur from asphyxiation by smoke or gases. As furniture, clothing, curtains and bed covers inside bedrooms are all combustibles; fire precautions in bedrooms should not be ignored.

Cigarette ends

Never smoke in bed. Mattresses could be set on fire by a lighted cigarette. Extinguish your cigarette ends thoroughly before disposing them in the ashtray.

Heaters

Never place the heater too close to beds, settees or chairs. Do not dry your clothes on top of the heater. Make sure that the heater is placed properly and would not be knocked down easily.

Essential Oil

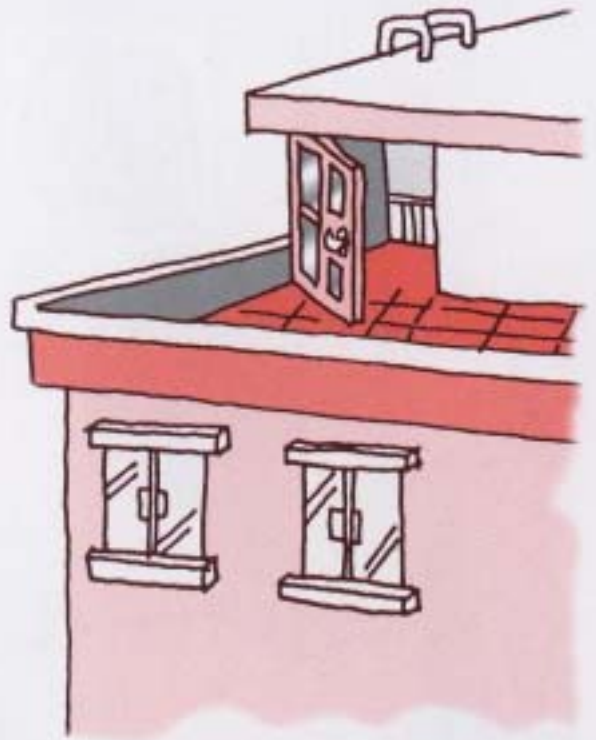
- Most essential oils are flammable liquids. Do not store large quantities of oils. Keep them away from direct sunlight and out of reach of children.
- When using a vaporizer, keep the room well-ventilated. Do not put a burner-type vaporizer near flammable materials nor place it at a windy position. Never leave the vaporizer unattended. Extinguish the flame before adding oil. Do not use a vaporizer with cracks on it.



- Do not add too much water to an electric vaporizer as it might wet its outside and power cord when water overflows.

Check around before going to bed

- Close the kitchen, living room and bedroom doors. This will prevent fire from spreading if it breaks out while you are sleeping.
- Make sure that all gas appliances and kerosene stoves are switched off and cigarettes extinguished.
- Make sure that all electrical appliances such as radios, televisions and portable heaters are either switched off or unplugged.



Roof

Make sure that the roof exit doors can be opened readily and conveniently, from inside without the use of a key.

Keep roofs clear of all obstructions. They may serve as a temporary refuge area in case of fire.



Protected Lobbies

Self-closing doors of protected lobbies must be kept closed at all times.

Staircases

Keep the staircase free of obstruction. Remember that the staircase is the important means of escape in case of fire.



Lifts

Do not use the lift if it is suspected that there is a fire in the building.

Doors and Gates

Gates used should be of the sliding type in order not to obstruct the common corridor, balcony or staircase when opened.

Decorations

During decoration period, handle paint, thinner or other flammable liquids with care, especially when handling flammable liquids with high volatility.

Don't store flammable goods such as petrol, kerosene and thinner, etc. if not necessary. Never store flammable goods in excess of the relevant exempted quantity in non-designated dangerous goods stores.

After polyurethane polishing, open all windows in order to dissipate the flammable gases accumulated indoors before turning on the power or igniting fire.



Fire Service Installations

Make sure that members of your family know how to operate the fire service installations provided in your building, e.g. extinguishers, hose reels, etc.

You should use fire service installations under safe conditions and only if you are confident to do so. The use of fire service installations should not delay your escape.

All fire service installations should be inspected by a registered contractor at least once in every 12 months and must be repaired immediately if there is any irregularity. Extinguishers are commonly used for tackling small fires.





The followings are some common types of extinguishers and fire blankets and their usage:

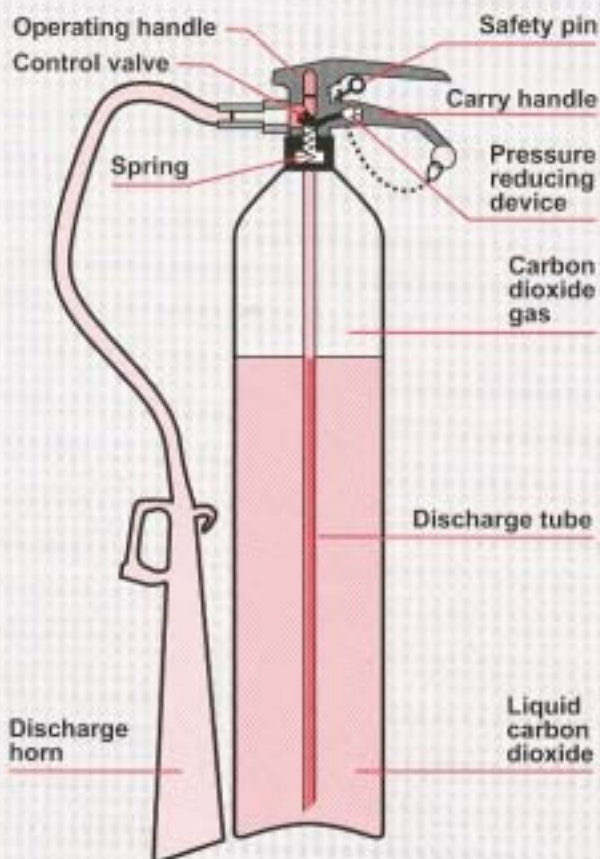
1. Carbon Dioxide Type Extinguishers

Use : On electrical fires, flammable liquids, delicate equipment, important documents, or fires in confined spaces.

Note : Vapours will asphyxiate. Withdraw to open air after use.

Method of operation :

- a. Bring the fire extinguisher to the fire ground and keep a safe distance.
- b. Pull out the safety pin of the operating handle, and point the discharge horn at the burning material.
- c. Press the operating handle and the control valve will be opened. The liquid carbon dioxide in the discharge horn will then vaporize and expand, and eject via the discharge horn towards the base of the fire, smothering the burning material.
- d. After the fire is extinguished, release the operating handle to halt the discharge of gas.





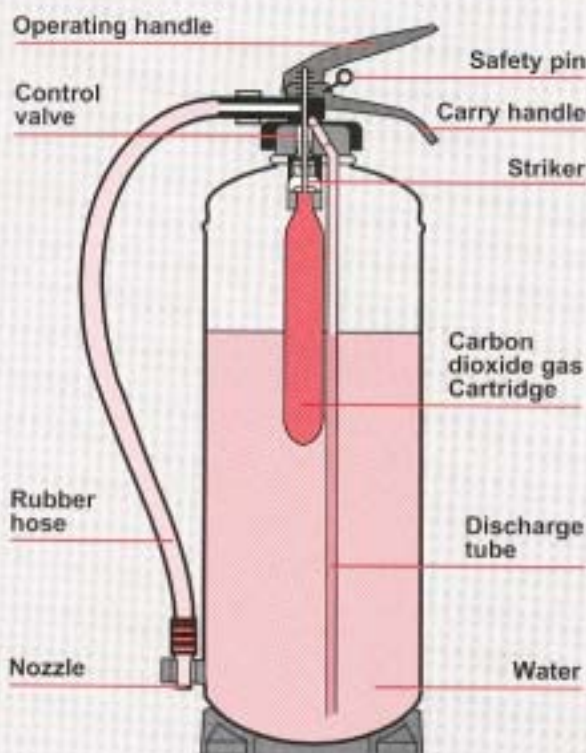
2. Water Type Extinguishers

Use : On fires involving woods, textiles and paper.

Never : On fires involving electrical or flammable liquids or metals.

Method of operation :

- a. Bring the fire extinguisher to the fire ground and keep a safe distance.
- b. Pull out the safety pin, and point the nozzle at the burning material.
- c. Press the operating handle. For gas cartridge type extinguishers, the gas cartridge will be pierced by the striker. Carbon dioxide will then be released, and at the same time, the control valve will be opened. For stored-pressure type extinguishers, the control valve will also be opened, and water in the cylinder will be forced out through the nozzle. The nozzle can be adjusted to direct the water jet at the base of the fire to cool down the burning material.
- d. After the fire is extinguished, release the operating handle to halt the discharge of gas.



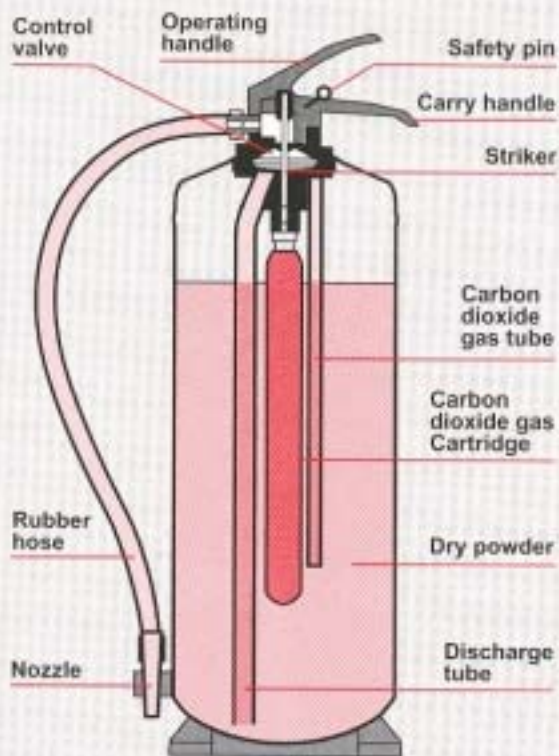


3. Dry Powder Type Extinguishers (gas-cartridge / stored-pressure)

Use : On most fires, flammable liquids, metal fires or electrical fires.

Method of operation :

- a. Bring the fire extinguisher to the fire ground and keep a safe distance.
- b. Pull out the safety pin of the operating handle, and point the nozzle at the burning material.
- c. Press the operating handle. For gas cartridge type extinguishers, the gas cartridge will be pierced by the striker. Carbon dioxide will then be released, and at the same time, the control valve will be opened. For stored-pressure type extinguishers, the control valve will also be opened. In both cases, dry powder stored in the cylinder will automatically be ejected through the nozzle. Adjust the nozzle so that the dry powder is directed at the base of the fire to smother the burning material.
- d. After the fire is extinguished, release the operating handle to stop the discharge of dry powder.



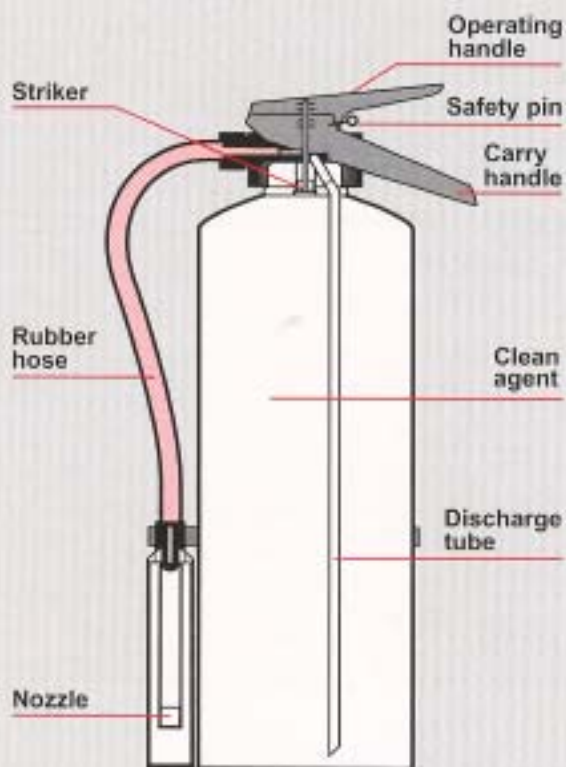


4. Clean Agent Fire Extinguishers

Use : On electrical fires, flammable liquids, delicate equipment, important documents.

Method of operation :

- a. Bring the fire extinguisher to the fire ground and keep a safe distance.
- b. Pull out the safety pin, and point the nozzle at the burning material.
- c. Press the operating handle and the control valve will be opened. The gas will eject through the nozzle towards the base of the fire, smothering the burning material.
- d. After the fire is extinguished, release the operating handle to halt the discharge of gas.





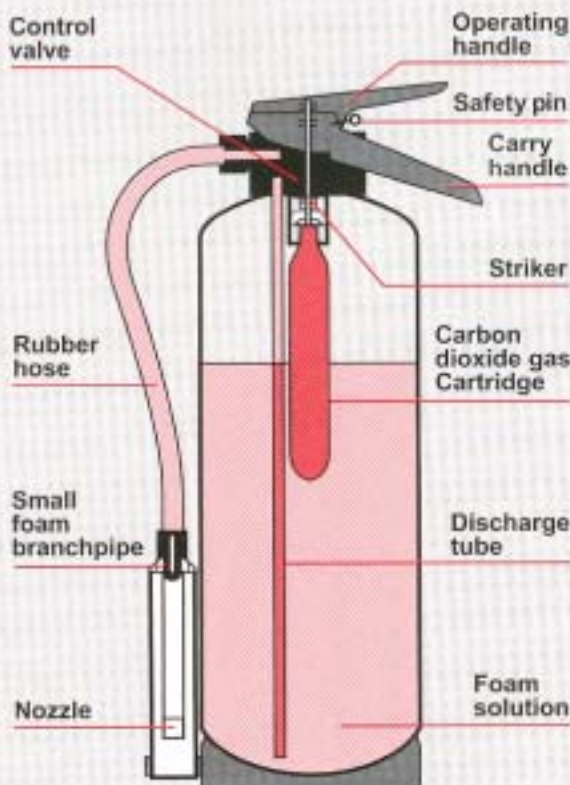
5. Foam Type Extinguishers (gas-cartridge/stored-pressure)

Use : On fires involving flammable liquids.

Never : On electrical fires.

Method of operation :

- a. Bring the fire extinguisher to the fire ground and keep a safe distance.
- b. Pull out the safety pin of the operating handle, and point the nozzle at the burning material.
- c. Press the operating handle. For gas cartridge type extinguishers, the gas cartridge will be pierced by the striker. Carbon dioxide will then be released, and at the same time, the control valve will be opened. For stored-pressure type extinguishers, the control valve will also be opened. In both cases, foam solution stored in the cylinder will automatically be ejected through the nozzle. Adjust the nozzle so that the foam is directed against the inner wall of the container until the foam flows all over the burning oil or flammable liquid and eventually smothers it.
- d. After the fire is extinguished, release the operating handle to halt the discharge of foam.





6. Fire Blankets

Use : On fires involving flammable liquids, such as small fires in the kitchen and laboratory.

Method of operation : Take the blanket out from the case and drape it over the flames to seal off air. Switch off the source of heat and leave the blanket in position until the burning material cools down.





Emergency Planning

- Prepare with your family a detailed emergency escape route in case of fire, and arrange a meeting place. The most dangerous time is at night when the family is asleep. Plan alternative ways and routes of escape beforehand, and be prepared for quick evacuation. You should actively participate in fire protection talks and fire drills organized by the Fire Services Department or the management office of your building.
- Make special arrangements for the sick, the aged, the disabled and the young, who cannot escape by themselves.
- Carry out fire drills at night and develop the most realistic plan.
- On your way out of the building, close whatever doors you pass by along the escape route. This may limit smoke and fire from spreading and reduce resultant damage.
- Dial 999 and call the Fire Services Department as quickly as possible in case of fire.
- Good housekeeping is a vital requisite for fire precaution. If, unfortunately, you have to deal with a fire, deal with it calmly.

For a Fire involving Fats or Oils

- Do not use water directly on burning fats or oils.
- Do not carry a pan of burning fats.
- To extinguish a fire involving fats or oils in a pan, turn off the gas supply and cover the pan with a lid or a plate. If the clothing, cooking fat or other inflammable liquids are on fire, fire blankets should be used to smother the fire. Fire blankets should preferably be kept in cylindrical metal containers fixed to the wall.
- Water should only be used on the surroundings if the fire spreads.



For a Fire on Electrical Equipment

Do

Switch off the current at the mains or unplug the appliance involved.

Do Not

Use water on live electrical equipment.

Use Only

Dry powder or carbon dioxide extinguishers for fires involving electrical equipment but also remember to switch off the current.

What to do if your Clothing Catches Fire

- If your clothing catches fire, lie down immediately – to prevent the flames from traveling up to your face – and then roll across the floor ' Drop and Roll '
- It will be better if you can wrap yourself in any textile fabric (i.e. a blanket, carpet, coat, curtain, dressing gown, towel, etc.), while rolling on the floor. But do not delay lying down an instant to search for these things.
- If you are present when someone's clothing catches fire, ask him to lie down immediately. Then grab a rug, mat, carpet, etc. and wrap round him. Be careful that your own clothing does not catch fire.



Statutory Requirement

It is an offence to leave any article or thing that obstructs the means of escape or to lock up the means of escape. Such an offence may result in direct prosecution without prior warning.

Any person who is guilty of such an offence shall be liable to a fine of \$100,000 on first conviction; a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for one year on a subsequent conviction; and, in any case, to a further fine of \$20,000 for each day during which the offence continues.

(with effect from 1.1.2004)