

Emergencies

An emergency is a sudden development that calls for immediate action. This means that even though things may happen without notice, like fires at home or chemical spills at an industrial plant, we have to act quickly to keep safe. While hurricanes, floods and earthquakes can be called natural emergencies, we as humans also cause situations, which require immediate action.



Lets discuss two common types of emergencies caused by humans!

DOMESTIC EMERGENCIES

The word domestic refers to anything dealing with the home or dwelling place. One of the most common domestic emergencies is FIRE. Fires use **oxygen** in the air to stay alive or lit. All fires are put out or extinguished when the supply of oxygen is taken away. This can be done with water, special chemicals or by covering the fire with a heavy blanket, sand or dirt. Fires are very destructive and we can get seriously hurt if we do not know what to do. Apart from being burnt by the flames, inhaling the smoke is very bad for our throat and lungs.

What should we do if a fire breaks out at home?

It is important to know what to do quickly so practise the following steps with the family right now!



1. Raise an alarm – anyone, a child or adult, who discovers a fire should shout “FIRE”, or make any noise that will get people’s attention.
2. Get out of the house fast – do not stop to gather up possessions or documents.

These can be replaced. First make sure that all family members get out safely and quickly. If there is a lot of smoke, crawl on the floor covering the mouth and nose until you get outside. Once outside and away from the smoke, take deep breaths.



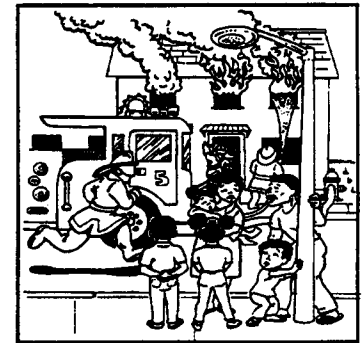


3. Call the Fire Service at 990 – someone in the family should be given this responsibility right now. In the rushing about we may think someone made the call, when no one did.

The next-door neighbour could be the person to make the call while we are getting out of the house.

Our emergency caller is _____

4. Go to a safe place away from the house and make sure all the family members are there.
5. Assess the fire from outside. If it is small, devise a plan for attempting to put it out safely.
6. Attack the fire – make sure to use water only if we know the cause of the fire.



If our clothes are on fire, we should drop to the ground as quickly as we can and roll around. Rolling on the ground prevents oxygen from getting in and so the fire goes out.

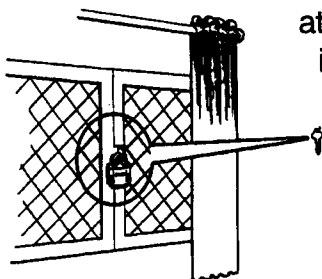
What can we do to prevent fires at home?

Many fires can be prevented. How successful we are at preventing fires at home depends on how well our houses are designed and whether we practise proper fire prevention. We can safeguard against fires by using the following tips!

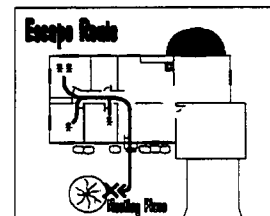
Safe exits

Making sure we can get out of the house quickly is very important. There should be at least two ways to get out of each room in the house, usually a door and a window.

Front and back doors to the house should be kept clear at all times. Make sure that burglar proofing



is not sealed completely on all the windows in the house. The grill should be able to open completely on at least one window in each room. It could be kept closed with a padlock to prevent intruders from getting in. Hang the key within easy reach of persons inside the room but not to anyone outside.

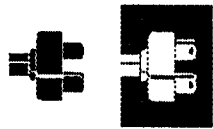


GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Fires can only break out when a source of ignition or a spark comes in contact with a material that will burn. If all these sources are kept under strict control, the danger of fire is greatly reduced. General cleanliness around the home is a good way to prevent fires. Here are some points to remember:

In the kitchen:

- Repair all electrical appliances that are not working right.



- Do not overload electrical outlets. In other words, do not plug in too many appliances to the same outlet in the wall.

- Water and electricity together cause a great shock. Always use dry hands to operate electrical equipment and never stand in water.



- Do not store anything over the stove. We can get burned reaching up for them.

- Turn pot handles to the back of the stove so children cannot pull them down.



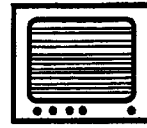
- Wear tight or short sleeves when cooking. Loose-fitting garments can catch fire.
- Do not leave any appliances plugged in that are not meant to stay on. That includes kettles, toasters, irons and others.
- Put matches or lighters where small children can't find them.
- Adults! Never leave lit candles unsupervised.



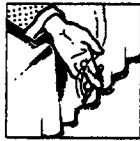
In the living room or family room:

- Use special outlet covers to prevent children from sticking their fingers inside. Masking tape can also be used to cover the outlet.

- Allow air space around the TV and stereo to prevent overheating. If the TV doesn't work right, it can be a fire danger. Have it checked out.

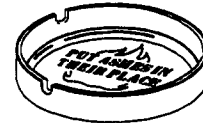


- Never run extension cords under rugs.



- Never smoke in bed. If you must smoke, sit in a chair.

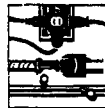
- Use large ashtrays when smoking.



- Before going to bed, make sure all cigarettes are completely out.
- During a blackout, put out all candles and lamps before going to bed.

In the garage or storage room:

- Do not use flammable liquids from spray-cans near heat, a pilot light or while smoking.



- Check all old wiring. Throw away frayed, worn or dried out extension cords.

- Clean up the workbench  after use.



- If a fuse blows, find out why. Replace the fuse with one that is the correct size (amperage).

- Put all floor sweepings, paint and oily rags in a separate place from metal filings and trimmings. Throw them away separately.



- Do not use gasoline to burn rubbish.

- Keep cupboards, spaces under benches and open areas free of dust and rubbish like wooden crates, cardboard cartons, paper, bush and grass.

Outdoors:

- Never use gasoline in a grill fire or coal-pot.



- Move the lawn mower away from gasoline fumes before starting it up. Cool the motor before putting in more fuel.

- Always use a flashlight, never a fire, inside a tent.



- Do not burn rubbish near to buildings or under trees. If you must burn rubbish, make sure the wind is blowing away from buildings.

What types of fires can break out at home?

Fires are classified according to the kind of materials that burn. It is very important to understand the different types because there are different ways to extinguish these fires or put them out.

Class A fires burn with ordinary materials such as wood, paper, cloth, upholstery and plastic. We can use water to put these fires out or a dry chemical extinguisher. Be sure to look at the label on the extinguisher before buying or using it.



B



Class B fires are fueled by flammable liquids such as kitchen grease, paint, oil, kerosene and gasoline. Dry chemical or carbon dioxide extinguishers should be used to put these fires out. NEVER USE WATER. Use dirt and sand.

C



Class C fires involve live electrical equipment or wires and we can use dry chemical or carbon dioxide extinguishers to put these out. NEVER USE WATER.



Class D fires involve metals and happen mostly at airports. Special fire extinguishers are needed to put these fires out.

D



Preventing fires at home is important. Some of us live in remote areas and it may take a long time for the fire trucks to get to us even though we make the call as soon as the fire breaks out. So although we now know what to do in the case of fires, we should make a special effort to reduce the danger of fire in our homes.

INDUSTRIAL EMERGENCIES

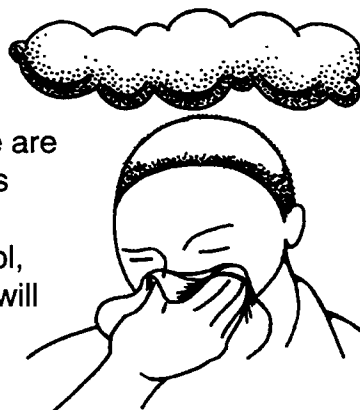
Some of us may live in areas where chemicals, metals and other materials are processed in large factories such as those at the Point



Lisas Industrial Estate. Although the workers at the factories try to make sure that all the machines are working properly and that all operations are carried out safely, there is still a chance that things may go wrong. However unlikely this is we must still be prepared for it and know what to do in the case of an industrial emergency.

If anything goes wrong at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate like a chemical spill in the form of escaping gases, or some other emergency, fire and emergency medical services will be called out to the Estate. If the emergency cannot be controlled, the community may have to be evacuated. This means that everyone will have to leave for a short time and go to a safe place further away.

Before evacuation however, there are many procedures we should know about to protect ourselves. Sometimes we are able to tell if there are gases in the air because of the smell. Most of us already know the smell of ammonia – a strong, biting smell that stings our nostrils, but methanol, another dangerous chemical has no smell. We will only know if there is a methanol spill when it is announced on the radio. If we smell gases in the air or hear radio bulletins, we should make sure to follow the guidelines on the next few pages quickly.



At home:

- Gather together all family members and pets and go inside the house
- Once inside, move through the rooms closing all windows and doors, and switching off any air-conditioners or fans.
- Go into the smallest room in the house. This is usually the bathroom, but we can use a bedroom if our toilet is outside.
- Make the room air-tight by blocking all the passages through which air from outside can get into the room. We do this by closing the windows and doors, and putting wet towels, newspapers or cloths at the base of the door leading to the outside. Dampen more towels and cover our nose and mouth to filter the air we breathe.
- Stay inside listening to the battery-operated radio to hear when officials say it is safe to go outside again. We should **NOT** use the telephone except in an extreme emergency, like calling for medical attention. The phone lines should be left open for emergency communications. If our children are at school we should **NOT** try to bring them home. The teachers and officials will begin the emergency actions to make sure the children are safe.

It is a good idea to plan now which room is going to be the safe haven at home. A safe haven is a small room with the least number of windows in it. It should also be a room that can hold all the family members and one that is easy to make into an air-tight room.

Our family's safe haven is

In public buildings:

We may not be at home when we smell gases in the air. If we are inside a public building with lots of other people, we should decide who is going to be in charge of dealing with the emergency and follow that person's instructions. We should still try to go into a small room and close all the windows and doors. Finding wet towels to put below the door may not be possible, so use newspapers.

Outdoors:

If we find ourselves on the road when we smell the gases, we should:

1. put a handkerchief over our nose and mouth to filter the air we breathe
2. note which way the wind is blowing. If we are DOWNWIND, we should turn and move crossways to the wind, feeling it on the side of our faces. We should try to get inside the nearest building. If we are UPWIND, or in front of the plant where the gases are escaping, we should continue going in that direction, towards the nearest building.

When there is a chemical spill and there are gases in the air we should not try to move away from the area by ourselves. The best thing to do is to get inside a building quickly and close up all the doors and windows to prevent air getting inside. Listening to the radio, we will know when it is safe to go outside. When this happens, we must open up the doors and windows as quickly as we can, remembering not to turn on any of the fans or air-conditioners until breeze has passed all through the house.

If the situation is so bad that emergency officials from the Estate decide to evacuate the area, as in the case of an explosion or intense fire, officials will be present to tell us what to do.

How do we evacuate an area?

The most important thing to remember is to follow the directions of the emergency officials. Exposure to chemicals could seriously affect our health and unnecessary traffic could hamper the evacuation of the area. Here are some points to remember during an evacuation of an area:

1. Leave the house or business locked.
2. On the road, remember obey the directions of the officials directing traffic.
3. Do not try to collect family members. This may cause congestion on the roads. They will be following the instructions of evacuation officials in their own area.
4. DON'T PANIC! Move about calmly, taking care to follow directions quickly. Use a handkerchief over your nose and mouth if there are gases or smoke in the air.

Family members may become separated during evacuation procedures, or they may be evacuated to different safe havens around the community. Everybody in the family should know the name, address and telephone number of a friend or relative in another community to contact in the case of an emergency. This is the family's "outside contact". Once phone lines are available, each family member should check in with that person, to exchange information on where everyone else in the family is located.

Our family's outside contact is

Address

Telephone number

EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY!

Do you know how to prevent a fire at home? Look at the picture below. Circle all the ways an emergency could start and colour the picture too. When you are done, look around your home. Are there any ways a fire or other emergency could start? Fix them right away!

