

Candle safety Illuminated

Relax safely

A lighted candle brings forth feelings of peace and serenity. When used properly, candles are safe and enjoyable, but used unsafely, they can easily start a fire. Candle fires account for approximately 5 percent of all U.S. residential fires. The majority of candle fire incidents are caused by misuse or not observing basic fire safety guidelines.

Prepare to be safe

It's not as simple as striking a match and lighting the wick. Before lighting a candle:

- read and follow any manufacturer's instructions carefully
- trim candle wicks to ¼ inch each time you burn them; long or crooked wicks cause uneven burning and dripping
- keep the wax pool free of wick trimmings, matches and debris
- use a candleholder specifically designed for candles, made from material that cannot burn or tip over easily and is large enough to contain melted wax
- place the candle holder on a stable, heat resistant surface
- keep candles, matches, hot wax and lighters where they cannot be reached or knocked over by children or pets

Always stay in the room with a lit candle and:

- keep candles at least one foot from combustible material, including furniture, drapes, bedding, wall paper, carpets, books, newspapers, magazines, clothing, paper, flammable decorations, centerpieces and flammable liquids
- burn candles in a well-ventilated room away from windows, doorways or ceiling fans where drafts, vents or air currents are present helps prevent rapid, uneven burning and avoids flame flare-ups and sooting. Drafts can also blow lightweight curtains or papers into the flame where they could catch fire
- place burning candles at least three inches apart. If candles are too close they will melt one another, or create their own drafts causing the candles to burn improperly
- wait until the extinguished candle has completely cooled before moving
- burn candles only until two inches of wax remains, or ½ inch if in a container, extinguishing the flame if it comes too close to the holder or container
- extinguish a candle if it smokes, flickers repeatedly or the flame becomes too high
- let the candle cool, trim the wick and check for drafts before re-lighting
- supervise children in a room with a burning candle
- allow children and teens to burn candles in their bedrooms only when supervised by an adult
- use UL night lights instead of candles; 40 percent of home candle fires start in the bedroom and cause 30 percent of associated deaths

Martin Insurance Agency, Inc.
1-812-752-2581 Office
www.Martin-Insurance.com

Email:

steve@martin-insurance.com
matt@martin-insurance.com
greg@martin-insurance.com

To extinguish your candle don't just blow it out:

- use a candle snuffer to extinguish a candle. It's the safest way to prevent hot wax and ashes from splattering
- never use water to extinguish a candle. Water can cause the hot wax to splatter and might break a glass container
- make sure a candle is completely extinguished and the wick ember is no longer glowing before leaving the room

If your power goes out, a candle may not be the best choice for light. Be sure to keep flashlights and other battery-powered lights on hand for emergencies. If you are using candles as a light source during an emergency, never use a candle when adding flammable fuel to a heater, lantern or other device.

Don't be a statistic

In 2004, an estimated 17,200 home fires were caused by candles. These fires caused an estimated 200 deaths, 1,540 injuries and direct property losses totaling \$200 million.

The most frequent causes of candle fires are:

- 50% – combustible material too close to the candle
- 18% – candles left unattended
- 12% – people falling asleep

Candle fires can start in any room where you have lit candles. Rooms where candle fires most frequently start are:

- 40% – bedroom
- 17% – living/family room or den
- 14% – bathroom

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