

Monthly Safety Theme
Get Ready for Fire Prevention Week 2009
“Stay Fire Smart! Don’t Get Burned”
October 4 – 10

This year’s national fire prevention theme focuses on burn awareness and prevention and is especially appropriate for South Carolina where more than 1,400 children ages 12 and under were treated in hospitals for fire- and burn-related injuries in 2007.

Of the 1,400 injuries, more than half occurred to children under the age of 5.

“Young children have thinner skin and so they burn more deeply and quickly,” State Fire Marshal John Reich said. “In a matter of seconds, children can sustain devastating physical and emotional injury. Kitchens and bathrooms can be the most deadly area of your home, especially for children. Close supervision is the key,”

Reich offers the following safety tips:

- When cooking, use back burners when possible and keep pot handles turned to the inside so they don’t stick out over the front of the stove. If left within reach, a curious child might grab or tip the pot over onto their body. It’s a good idea to keep children at least three feet away from cooking appliances.
- Electrical cords for cooking appliances should be kept away from counter edges to prevent children from pulling appliances off counter-tops and onto them.
- Test bath water before putting your child into the bathtub. Children can be scalded by bath water in only a few seconds. Set your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or below and always test the water before letting your child get into it.
- Remember to treat a burn by running cool water over the area for three to five minutes. Cover with a clean, dry cloth. If the burn is bigger than your fist, or if you have any questions, get medical help right away.
- Keep matches and lighters out of children’s reach. Lighters are sometimes made to look like toys, enticing young children even further to “play” with them. Teach children that matches and lighters are tools, not toys.
- Smoke alarms should be installed on every level and in every sleeping area of your home. Test them once a month and replace batteries when necessary. Working smoke alarms provide early warning detection allowing more time to escape a fire.
- Install residential fire sprinkler systems. Fire sprinkler systems provide the ultimate in fire protection and installation is relatively inexpensive at around \$2 per square foot during construction. They control or extinguish fires fast, protecting lives, property and other valuables.

“Fires don’t only happen to the people next door,” Reich said. “In homes not equipped with fire sprinkler systems, it can take less than three minutes for your home to be totally involved in fire. It’s important that everyone reacts quickly and calmly to escape. A home escape plan should be developed identifying two ways out of each room, a meeting place outside, and a way to contact the fire department once you are outside. Practice the plan regularly to make sure everyone knows what to do when the smoke alarm sounds.”