



Fire Prevention Canada

Working with the private and public sectors to achieve
fire safety through education

SAFETY TIPS FOR THE OFFICE

An office fire can be devastating, resulting in the loss of life, business interruption or permanent closure, jobs, property and information. Offices are loaded with combustibles: carpeting, draperies, papers, books, wood and upholstered furniture, plastic laminate, vinyl-fabric-covered furniture, wood panelling, as well as electrically powered toasters, microwave ovens, kettles, computers and other appliances. Combine these with the human element and the stage is set for a potentially devastating fire.

- Keep the combustible load - carpeting, upholstered furniture - to a minimum.
- Keep exits clear of combustibles e.g. discarded paper and empty cartons.
- In designated areas where smoking is permitted, provide the proper disposal of smoking materials, like an outdoor cigarette receptacle.
- Provide adequate clearance and circulation of air between combustible material and hot surfaces or heat sources such as copy machines, word processors and computers.
- Unplug electrical appliances - coffee makers, space heaters and hot plates - when not in use.
- Restrict and monitor the use of heaters and hot plates.
- To ensure they meet code requirements, all electrical distribution systems should be checked by a professional/certified electrician.
- Perform regularly scheduled and recorded maintenance of electrical equipment.
- Prevent access to the office by unauthorized personnel.
- Keep flammables properly stored and secured.
- Provide adequate security: exterior/interior lighting, intrusion alarms, guard service, well-secured access openings.
- Provide automatic sprinkler protection and/or heat, smoke and fire alarm systems. Adequate sprinkler coverage is the key to providing the most effective fire protection in buildings.
- Strategically locate the portable fire extinguishers suitable for particular fire hazards, and train key employees on their proper operation.
- Establish an 'Emergency Team' and train each member on how to respond to fire emergencies.
- Develop a fire emergency evacuation plan and conduct at least two fire drills per year in order to familiarize office personnel on how to respond to fire emergencies.
- Obtain assistance from your local fire department on fire prevention, use of fire extinguishers, inspections and emergency response procedures.