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Fires

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4 fire safety products you should always have in the house

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It's always a good idea to bolster up your family's emergency response plan, taking into account various scenarios that can occur around the home. While some emergency situations are more avoidable than others or have a lower likelihood of happening given one's geographic location, a house fire is something that can happen in any home, anywhere in the world. In just two minutes, a fire can become life-threatening. And in just five minutes, an entire residence can be engulfed in flames, according to Ready.gov.

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Sunday, October 9 kicks off Fire Prevention Week 2022, observed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which aims to bring awareness to the real threat of fires while providing knowledge on how to stay safe in case of a fire. In the event of a house fire, when the safety of your family and property can be jeopardized in just a matter of seconds, it is crucial to be prepared with all the key essentials that can help you stay safe in the scenario you hope never happens.

So, what better time to make sure your home is ready to combat a potential danger like fire than this week? From fire extinguishers to fireproof safes, here are four products your home needs to keep your property, valuables and, most importantly, your family safe in the event of a housefire.

1. A fire extinguisher

In case of a fire outbreak, every home should have a portable fire extinguisher on every floor of the home. This small yet mighty tool can save lives and property in an emergency.

Many people might not know that there are many different fire extinguishers out there: The five primary types according to FEMA are Class A, B, C, D and K, which are all designed to extinguish different kinds of fires. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends the use of a multipurpose fire extinguisher at home—these are rated for Class A, B and C fires. These classes cover fires with ordinary materials wood, cloth and paper, combustible and flammable liquid and electrical equipment.

At Reviewed, we've tested several fire extinguishers in our labs to determine which was the best one for home use. While one isn't necessarily objectively better than the other, some proved to be more useful better for specific fire situations. For example, when we tested the Kidde Pro 210 fire extinguisher, we found it to be a small but powerful extinguisher that's easy to use on small to medium-sized fires. For medium to large fires, the Kidde Pro 10 MP holds a hefty 10 pounds of suppression agency, making it more of a similar model to ones that firefighters may use. While you may need to practice wielding the heavy extinguisher, it's useful for large spaces and those who have experience using fire extinguishers.

Make sure everyone in your household knows how to use a fire extinguisher in case of emergency, with the exception of small children, according to the NFPA, due to their physical ability and dexterity to handle a complex tool. If you or someone in your family isn't exactly sure how to use one, FEMA provides a helpful acronym—"PASS"—for proper extinguisher use:

- **P:** Pull the pin. Make sure the extinguisher nozzle is pointing away from you when releasing the locking mechanism.
- **A:** Aim low and point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
- **S:** Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.
- **S:** Sweep the nozzle in a side-to-side motion across the fire.

Lastly, while fire extinguishers are important to have, sometimes they aren't enough to contain certain fires, and a fire escape plan should be in order. The NFPA says every home should have a fire escape plan with specific plans on where you'll evacuate to and meet up, as well as how to escape the home. It's a good idea to practice your escape plan with your family members so everyone is on the same page.

\$49.90 from Walmart

\$83.46 from Walmart

2. Working smoke detectors

Smoke detectors are absolutely essential on every floor and in every bedroom of the home. But, smoke alarms are only as powerful as their batteries are. To ensure your smoke detectors are in good shape and working properly, you should test them on a monthly basis. The detector will typically have a 'test' button you can press to make sure the batteries are all good. For older smoke detectors, FEMA recommends replacing them 10 years after their manufacture date—no matter if it's working or not.

If possible, buy interconnected smoke detectors or hire a professional to connect the smoke detectors you already have. With interconnected detectors, if one alarm in the house goes off, all of the alarms will follow suit, alerting the entire household of a potential fire hazard.

Ideally, you should have a combination smoke detector and carbon monoxide (CO) detector to keep your home safe from both potential fires or carbon monoxide leaks. We've tested plenty of smart smoke and CO detectors and monitors on the market and found the Nest Protect to be our top choice. It offers all the safety basics you want in a monitor, plus smart upgrades like connectivity with a smartphone app, a monthly self-test feature, a low-battery alert and much more.

\$119 from Amazon

3. A portable escape ladder

As part of your fire escape plan recommended by the NFPA, if your home has two or more floors, you and your household need to prepare for potentially needing to escape the upper levels without the use of your indoor stairs. For this reason, an escape ladder should be placed near windows as an "additional escape route", says the NFA.

Escape ladders can be stored away in an accessible location when not in use, but ensure that every member of the household knows where it is and knows how to properly use it. Before using one, carefully read the manufacturer's instructions and have both adults and children in the household practice setting it up and using it—from a first-story window only—to become comfortable with using it.

\$48.60 from Amazon

4. A safe that's fireproof

If a house fire occurs, your top priority is ensuring your household is safe and can escape if necessary. However, that's not to say that material items—such as valuable jewelry, sentimental objects or photos and hard-to-replace belongings like original birth certificates—aren't important to protect, too.

If a house fire is already occurring, consider it too late to protect any momentos or valuables you haven't previously secured. That being said, you can prepare well in advance by always storing these important items in a fireproof safe that can ideally be recovered, even after a worst-case scenario fire situation.

Several fireproof safes also happen to be waterproof, too, giving them double-duty protection against other emergencies like flooding from severe storms or hurricanes.

\$183 from Amazon

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