

# Fire / Emergencies

*February 2015*

## Fire safety in Condominiums

**“YOUR SAFETY IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY”**

### Protection

**S**moke Alarms are required to protect the sleeping areas in your home.

Residents are responsible for testing the alarms monthly - push the button on the alarm, it should beep loudly. If your smoke alarm uses batteries they should be replaced at least once every year unless they are the long life type. In that case the smoke alarm should be replaced when the battery is dead. Smoke alarms have a life of about ten years. Some smoke alarms have a hush feature. If you are regularly setting off your smoke alarm due to burnt food or steam from your shower, your alarm may need to be relocated away from kitchen areas or bathroom hallways. If this is not possible, the hush feature should be used instead of removing the battery. Push the hush button once and the alarm should go silent for about 15 minutes. It will reactivate when the 15 minutes are up.

### Preparation

**I**f you hear a fire alarm, react immediately. Do not wait to begin to evacuate.

If there is a fire every second counts. If you discover a fire, set off your fire alarm to alert others. If you can close doors to confine the fire, do so. Upon evacuating the building, call 911 from a safe location to ensure the fire department is responding. Be prepared to tell them the nature of the emergency, and the address of the building.

## Disabled Persons

**I**f you are unable to evacuate for some reason, unable to use the stairs for instance, ask the building manager if you can have your name and location added to the list of impaired persons that should be kept at the Fire Alarm Panel or in a location that is secure but available to the fire department. You may shelter in place in your apartment if that is not where the fire is located. Close doors to hallways and seal along the lower edge with towels or other cloth. Call 911 to let them know where you are located. **DO NOT** break windows as this may allow smoke from below to enter your apartment. Open windows if they can be reclosed if you need fresh air. Signal by waving something out the window or tie the curtains in a knot to let the fire department know you are there. You may also shelter in place on a stairwell landing if there is room. Send someone to inform the fire department of your location or call 911 on your cell phone.

## Escape Plan

**E**very family should have a fire escape plan — and practice it. Know at least two ways out of the building. **NEVER** use an elevator in a fire emergency! If you are unable to use stairs see the Disabled Persons section above. Feel door knobs **BEFORE** you open the doors. If they are hot or if you encounter smoke after you open the door use another exit or prepare to shelter in place. Close all doors as you pass through them to confine the fire. Do not lock the doors.

If you encounter smoke, drop to the floor and crawl as the space above you may be extremely hot. The good air is near the floor because the hot smoke rises. Choose a family meeting place out of and away from the building where you can tell the firefighters you all made it out or other information that will help them do their job. Remember - in an emergency we do not rise to the occasion, but we sink to the level of our training. Practice fire drills as if your life depended on it...it does!

## **Heating**

Keep portable and space heaters at least three feet from anything that can burn. Pay special attention to bed covers, drapes, and kid's toys. Never leave heaters on when you leave home or go to bed and keep children and pets well away from them. Be careful with candles and fireplaces, too.

## **Smoking**

Never smoke in bed or when you are drowsy! Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers and put water on cigarette butts before discarding them.

## **Matches**

Matches and lighters and kids can be a deadly combination. Store them up high where kids can't reach them or better yet lock them up. Teach your children that matches and lighters are not toys. If children find matches or a lighter, they should tell a grown-up immediately.

## **Cooking**

Never leave cooking unattended. Keep pot handles turned inward so the pots can't be knocked or pulled over. If grease catches fire, carefully slide a lid over the pan to smother the flames.

## **Electrical**

Replace any electrical cord that is cracked or frayed. Don't overload extension cords or run them under rugs.

## **Storage**

Keep storage areas secured to protect against arson. If you notice garbage or other items stored in hallways, stairwells, or against the building, notify the building management.

# How Would *You* React if a Fire Occurred?

If a fire occurred in your condominium right now, what would you do?

## Should You Fight The Fire?

Before you begin to fight a fire, you need to:

- 1) Sound the your alarm to alert the neighbors.
- 2) Call 9-1-1.
- 3) Determine that the fire is confined to a small area and is not spreading.
- 4) Confirm that there is a clear path to an exit which is not threatened by the fire.
- 5) Know how to use a fire extinguisher.

## How to Evacuate Safely

If you have determined the fire is too large for you to fight, leave the area and:

- 1) Close, but **DON'T** lock, doors behind you.
- 2) Use the nearest stairwell to exit; **DON'T** take an elevator. Remember to crawl under the smoke, **NEVER** stand or walk in a smoke filled building.
- 3) Meet in a pre determined, designated area so a head count can be made.

## What to Do if You Are Trapped

You **CAN** survive even if you are trapped in a burning building. In order to increase the amount of time you have before the fire reaches you, remember the following:

- 1) Call 9-1-1 and tell them exactly where you are.
- 2) Put as much distance between yourself and the fire as possible. Close all doors as you pass through them, and remember to test them for heat.
- 3) **Never** go through a hot door.
- 4) Seal off cracks or vents by using paper, cloth; tape on anything you can find. Turn off the ventilation system if possible.

Know What To Do!

“Your Safety Is Your Responsibility”

# In Case of Fire...

## DO's: Don'ts:

Keep calm.....Don't panic  
Report the fire by calling 9-1-1 .....Don't assume the fire has been reported.  
Advise other neighbors.....Don't try to quickly gather belongings  
Use nearest stairwell.....Don't use your elevator  
Close doors and windows.....Don't break windows  
Keep low, *under* the smoke..... Don't run through smoke-filled areas  
Use an extinguisher on a *small* fire.....Don't use & extinguisher on a *large* fire

## Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers save lives and property by putting out or containing small fires until the fire department arrives. Even against small fires, however, extinguishers are useful under certain conditions...

- 1) The operator must know how to use them. There is no time to read instructions during an emergency.
- 2) They must be within easy reach and in working order, fully charged.
- 3) They need to be kept near the exit. The user needs to have an escape route that will not be blocked by fire.
- 4) They should match the type of fire you are fighting.
- 5) They must be large enough to put out the fire. Most portable extinguishers discharge completely in as few as *eight* seconds.

# Operating A Fire Extinguisher

Before using your extinguisher, make sure your back is to an exit and that you are standing six to eight feet from the fire.

REMEMBER **P.A.S.S.**

(Pull Aim Squeeze Sweep)

**PULL** the pin: hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you and pull out the pin located below the handle.

**AIM** low: Point the extinguisher nozzle at the base of the fire.

**SQUEEZE** the lever: Squeeze slowly and evenly to release the extinguisher.

**SWEEP** from side to side: Move carefully toward the fire until the flames are out.

## Selecting and Using an Extinguisher Correctly

### How to Select the Correct Extinguisher

There are three main categories of combustibles:

**Type A** consists of ordinary materials such as paper, plastics, fabric, and trash.

**Type B** consists of flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil, grease, and some paints and solvents.

**Type C** consists of energized electrical equipment including appliances, computers, circuit breakers, and wiring.

In order to put out a fire quickly, efficiently, and safely you must have a fire extinguisher quickly accessible, and the fire extinguisher must be capable of putting the fire out.

Take a look around the area where the fire extinguisher will be used. Are you in a kitchen which has potential for a grease fire, or are you in a bedroom where you could be putting out a flaming pile of clothes? Identify what you will be most likely to be putting out and select your extinguisher accordingly.

Luckily extinguisher manufacturers make it a whole lot easier for us to pick the right extinguisher by designing extinguishers to be effective against multiple fire types.

A very common and effective tool is an **ABC extinguisher** because it is capable of handling all three of the most common fire types.

Even though fire extinguishers can help reduce the risk of a small fire developing into a large fire you must have the correct extinguisher and the knowledge about operating extinguishers to make them effective.