

Small home appliances are a leading cause of house fires, with most of these fires occurring overnight. We rely on these appliances for convenience and use them more than we might recognize. It's important to take appropriate steps to ensure the appliances we use are safe, and that we are using them safely.

Small appliance safety tips

- ▶ **Unplug your appliances when not in use.** Unplug all small electrical appliances – such as hair dryers, shavers, curling irons, clothes irons and toasters – when not in use.
- ▶ **Inspect appliances and cords.** Always check for frayed power cords and never use an appliance that is damaged. An appliance that repeatedly blows a fuse or trips a circuit breaker could indicate fire or electrical shock hazard; unplug the appliance and have it repaired or replaced.
- ▶ **Care for appliances and cords.** Never wrap the cords around hair dryers or styling irons when storing them. That causes kinks, which shorten their lifespan. If your hair dryer smells funny, sounds funny, or you can hear the parts rattling when you pick it up, it's time to replace it.
- ▶ **Use extension cords safely.** Never route electric cords (including extension cords) under carpeting, where they can overheat or be damaged by furniture. Always inspect the extension cord before use and discard if there is damage.
- ▶ **Do not overload outlets.** Limit how many appliances you have plugged in and use at one time. Only use one heat-producing appliance (such as a coffee maker, toaster, space heater, etc.) plugged into a receptacle outlet at a time.
- ▶ **Plug major appliances directly into a wall receptacle outlet.** Major appliances (refrigerators, dryers, washers, stoves, air conditioners, microwave ovens, etc.) should be plugged directly into a wall receptacle outlet. Extension cords and plug strips should not be used.
- ▶ **Check for recalls.** You can check for the latest product recalls at **Healthy Canadians**. If you are moving into a home with existing appliances, you should record their make and model and check for any recalls or review customers' experiences with those products.
- ▶ **Test GFCI outlets.** Be sure you have a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection anywhere electricity and water are within six feet of each other, such as in your kitchen, bathroom and outdoors, to protect against electric shock. GFCI outlets are designed to save lives when a small appliance comes into contact with water. Press the test button. You should hear a click sound that trips the outlet. To ensure it has actually cut the power, try the same test using a nightlight. If the light goes out, you know you're safe.

- ▶ **Use only approved appliances.** Make certain all small appliances are approved by an independent testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories Canada (ULC) and Canadian Standards Association (CSA).
- ▶ **Follow instructions.** Only use small appliances according to the manufacturer's instructions.

What to do if there is a fire

When there is a fire, your priority should be to keep yourself and others safe. Follow the below instructions if there is a small appliance fire:

1. If you can, unplug the small appliance. This eliminates the power source and could slow – or extinguish – the fire.
2. Call 9-1-1 or activate the building alarm system (if applicable), or have someone else do this for you.
3. Assist any person(s) in immediate danger and those incapable of exiting on their own to exit the building, as long as you are not putting yourself at risk.
4. Attempt to extinguish the fire. If you are not putting yourself or anyone else at risk. Only attempt to fight a fire if you believe you are capable, the fire is small and contained, there is no toxic smoke and you have a way to escape if needed.

Information contained in this tip sheet was sourced from the National Fire Protection Association, the Government of Alberta and the Fire Equipment Manufacturers Association.

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