



MEDFORD BUREAU OF FIRE PREVENTION

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CANDLE FIRES

Facts:

We have seen a dramatic increase recently in candle-caused residential fires. Data obtained through the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) shows that structure fires caused by candles increased nationally over 500 percent from 1980 (8,500 fires) to 1998 (12,800 fires). In the same time period candle deaths increased 750 percent (20 to 170 deaths, respectively). In 1999, Oregon had 131 reported related candle fires, causing two fatalities, 19 injuries and almost two million dollars in property loss. In 2000, three Oregonians lost their lives in candle related fires.

Unattended, abandoned, or inadequately controlled candles are the leading cause of home candle fires. The increase in numbers, when other causes of fire decreased over the same time period, is attributed to candle popularity. People are purchasing and using more candles these days, especially around the winter holidays.



If using candles, make sure you apply the following safeguards:

- Keep candles away from anything that can ignite.
- Always use sturdy non-combustible containers for candleholders.
- Remain in the same room as the candles; never leave them unattended.
- Place candles out of reach of children and pets, on a sturdy and uncluttered surface.
- Don't place the candles on windowsills or near drafts.
- Always make sure the candles are out before leaving the room or going to bed.
- Avoid buying candles that have combustibles embedded in or around them.
- Keep candlewicks trimmed to one-quarter inch.
- Keep candles or open flames away from flammable or combustible liquids or vapor.
- Open flame devices that use liquid or solid fuel must meet precautions.
- Make sure you have working smoke detectors in your home.

For more information, see the following links:

http://egov.oregon.gov/OOHS/SFM/Home_Fire_Safety_Campaign.shtml
<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prhtml01/01176.html>
