

A Renter's Guide to Fire Safety

Fall's cozy comforts, like extra heat and flickering candles, also bring specific fire risks. And while renting might limit your control over the property, your personal safety is still in your hands. Here are the essential preventative steps every renter can take.

Cooking Safety

- Never leave stovetop cooking unattended.
- Keep flammable items like oven mitts, wooden utensils, and packaging away from the burners.
- If a pan catches fire, carefully slide a lid over it and turn off the heat. **Never use water**, as it will cause the oil to splatter.
- Avoid plugging multiple high-wattage appliances (like a microwave, toaster, and coffee maker) into the same outlet.

Heating Safety

- Maintain a 3-foot "kid- and pet-free" zone around space heaters. Always place them on a hard, level surface, never on a rug or furniture.
- Plug heaters directly into a wall outlet; never use an extension cord.
- Never use your oven or stovetop to heat your apartment.

Candles and Smoking

- For ambiance, use battery-operated LED candles. They provide a warm glow with zero risk.
- If you smoke, do so outside. Use deep, sturdy ashtrays and ensure all smoking materials are fully extinguished.

Appliances and Wiring

- Regularly check for frayed wires or cracked plugs on your appliances.
- Notify your landlord in writing about any sparking outlets, frequent circuit breaker trips, or persistent burning smells.
- Never run power cords under rugs, through doorways, or where furniture can pinch them.



Safety Equipment

Your landlord is responsible for providing equipment, but you are responsible for its upkeep and knowing how to use it.

- **Smoke Alarms:** Test them monthly. Replace batteries at least twice a year (a great reminder is when you change your clocks). If an alarm is missing, broken, or more than 10 years old, submit a maintenance request to your landlord immediately.
- **Fire Extinguisher:** Purchase a small, multi-purpose ([ABC-rated](#)) extinguisher for your kitchen. Remember the PASS technique:
 - Pull the pin.
 - Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire.
 - Squeeze the handle slowly.
 - Sweep from side to side.
- **Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detectors:** [CO detectors](#) are critical if you have gas appliances or an attached garage. Test them monthly alongside your smoke alarms.
- **Escape Ladders:** If you live on an upper floor, store a [certified escape ladder](#) in an easily accessible window and ensure everyone knows how to deploy it.

Escape Plan

- Find two ways out of your building. Identify your primary exit and a second escape route from every room. Ensure windows are not painted or nailed shut.
- Practice your plan. Walk both escape routes with your household. Designate a safe meeting spot outside, like a specific tree or lamppost, where everyone will gather.
- Feel doors before exiting. If a door is hot to the touch, use your second way out.
- Always use the stairs during a fire instead of the elevator.

Even though you rent, you are the first line of defense for your safety. By testing alarms, knowing your exits, and practicing your plan, you transform fear into preparedness.