



How to protect your house from fire

When a fire starts in your home you may have as little as two minutes to escape. Early warning from a working smoke alarm plus a fire escape plan that has been practised regularly can save lives. Learn what else to do.

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House fires in Uganda are very rampant. On average, about 10 fires are reported countrywide every day. Although more common in rural areas, fire outbreaks countywide have destroyed property and taken people's lives. Although extra care should be taken daily, most attention should be paid during construction. It is, therefore, important to know the major causes of the fires and know how best they should be prevented.

Electricity

Francis Munyambabazi, a freelance civil engineer, says protecting your house from fire caused by electricity starts at the time of construction. As you build the house, it is important to put more focus on electrical wiring.

"One should buy genuine wires and hire a certified person to do the wiring. An unqualified electrician will do substandard work which puts your house at risk of getting destroyed by fire from electricity," he says.

Electricity and its appliances can similarly be a cause of fire outbreak in your home so you need to be more careful to ensure that all your electrical outlets are covered by protectors.

Frayed wires run the risk of sudden fire outbreak from an

accidental spark. Therefore, be responsible enough to replace any frayed wires as soon as possible. The same goes for plugs, fuses and breakers which are unstable and seem to tripping or blowing frequently.

In short, you have to keep regular check on the electrical cords, fuses and plugs so that you are never late for the needed replacements which will go a long way in securing your home from fire accidents. This is to stress here that electrical failure or malfunctioning is one of the prime causes behind fire accidents at home leading to a severe 1.5 billion USD worth property mayhem.

Candles

Often times, there is a power blackout in your area and you probably do not have a generator but need light. Often times, candles have been the next best alternative.

However, candles have been identified as one of the major causes of fires in many houses and so many deaths have been linked to them. You do not have to stop using them because they could be the only alternative but you have to use them in a smarter way. Make sure they are not lit by a child, mind where you place it and do not forget to put it off before leaving the room.

If you have any children, you need to educate them about the fire safety prevention tips so that they can take charge themselves when

Helpful fire safety products

Here are some fire safety products that may be helpful to have on hand during a fire or to prevent one from getting out of hand:

- **Fire extinguishers.** Store a fire extinguisher in your kitchen and on each level of your home, near bedrooms. Find SafeWise's top fire extinguisher picks here.
- **Fire blanket.** Use a fire-retardant blanket to extinguish a small fire by smothering it before it has a chance to get any bigger.
- **Smoke detectors.** These will go off immediately smoke is detected in the house.
- **Home fire sprinklers.** Automatic home fire sprinklers, once activated, can help greatly reduce flames and heat, often long before the fire department can get to your home. You can search for companies near you that can install sprinkler systems in your home.
- **A Fire escape ladder.** If you live in a building with more than one level, fire escape ladders can help you quickly and safely escape out a window.

Source: www.safewise.com

1.5b

ESTIMATED AMOUNT IN USD OF PROPERTY DESTROYED BY ELECTRICAL FIRES PER YEAR

Move all the inflammable stuff such as dish towels and paper towels away from stove & heating elements. Do not allow children in the kitchen when you are cooking and even if they want to come, make sure they stand at a distance. FILE PHOTO

you are not around. Have your fire escape plan which you must rehearse with the whole family.

Fire in the kitchen

During the construction process, ensure that electrical wiring in the kitchen is done professionally. Also adding a chimney to the kitchen to let out smoke would be an excellent idea.

Ibrahim Mudde, a kitchen designer at Truelevel Construction Company, says: "The chimney acts as a cooling agent in the kitchen and also let out smoke. Every kitchen should have one to reduce the risk of fire outbreaks."

Move all the inflammable things

such as dish towels away from stove and heating elements. Do not allow little children and pets in the kitchen when you are cooking. Even if they want to come, make sure they stand at a distance and watch from afar.

Mudde says, "Old chimneys are also one of the major reasons behind fire accidents at home. It is therefore recommendable that you get the chimney inspected annually to find out the faults and needed repairs. If your chimney is in proper shape, you can prevent fire accidents by a great extent."

All electric appliances in the kitchen must be earthed to minimize electric shock tendencies. Also have a fire extinguisher or blanket in case of fire.

Many people in Uganda neglect the importance of extractors or kitchen fans but they are very important in air circulation. The benefits of an exhaust fan are for both safety and practical reasons. They can make the kitchen more enjoyable and safer

Fire alarm and extinguisher

The fire alarm or smoke detector is one of the most important tips when it comes to home fire safety. This is installable in the house ceiling during construction and their efficiency must be inspected monthly to see if they are working fine.

"Replace the batteries annually and you have to get new ones once every five years. You also need to educate everyone in your family about the sound and functioning of the smoke alarm to keep them safe," Munyambabazi says.

Though taken lightly, having a fire extinguisher at home should be a necessity. "Some people think that having it would be for busy places like schools and hospitals but they are needed at home too for safety. Every member of the family must know how to operate it," says Mudde.

Cooking place

If your house has no indoor kitchen, it is not wise to cook from inside the house because you may not know where exactly the wiring may have passed which is likely to spark off an outbreak of fire.

"It is better to cook from outside the house because you may be cooking near a place where the wires were joined from. This will automatically cause a fire in your house," Mudde says.



Have your fire escape plan handy and do not forget to rehearse it with the whole family at least twice a year.