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VACATION FIRE SAFETY

If you are planning a vacation and your home will be empty, you can go away with less worry if you check your home prior to leaving. Make sure that all stoves and electrical appliances have been turned off or disconnected. Unplug all television sets and radios since lightning storms or sudden electrical surges could cause a fire in this equipment while you are away. When you return from vacation, check your smoke detectors to make sure they are functioning properly.

If you are staying in a motel or hotel, it is important to know survival actions in case there is a fire. Select one that, at a minimum, has a fire detection system – smoke detectors. However, it is preferable to select lodging that also has a fire sprinkler system in place. If you must stay in a facility without smoke detectors or fire sprinklers, request a room on the first or second floor and bring your own battery operated smoke detector with you.

When you first enter your room, read the fire safety information provided. It is usually posted near or on the back of the entry door. As is the case in your home, you need to plan your escape ahead of time. Locate two exits nearest your room. Make sure the fire exit doors work and are unlocked. Locate the nearest fire alarm and read the operating instructions. In a real fire, the hallway may become dark with smoke so count the number of doors from your room to each exit. By doing this, you will know where you are in case you are caught in a dark hallway. Keep your room key and a flashlight near your bed and upon exiting your room, take these with you. Having your room key with you is imperative in the event you need to re-enter your room. Should the fire alarm sound, follow the posted fire safety emergency guidelines. Do not ignore fire alarms. Prior to exiting your room, feel the door with the back of your hand. If the door is warm, do not open it. If the door feels cool, open it carefully and be ready to slam it shut if smoke or heat rushes in. Should you need to remain in your room, notify the fire department and tell them your specific location including the floor level and room number. If able to exit,

proceed to the nearest fire exit. If possible and without straying from your path of egress, pull the fire alarm as you exit. Remember to crawl low if met with smoke. Should a fire start in your room, leave immediately and close doors behind you to confine the fire and prevent it from spreading. Once again, if possible and without straying from your path of egress, pull the fire alarm as you exit. If this is not possible, notify the fire department once you exit the building and are safely out of danger. Never use an elevator in a fire, always take the stairs. Elevators can malfunction and many are heat-activated and have been known to travel to the fire floor and stay at that level. If camping, it is imperative to use a tent that is flame retardant and remember, flame retardant does not mean fireproof. In addition, sleeping bags and clothing inside a tent can easily catch fire. A tent should be placed upwind from any campfires or cooking fires. Create a three-foot clearing around the tent and use only battery operated lights near or inside it. Always refuel any heat-producing appliance such as lanterns and stoves outside a tent and always store flammable liquids outside the tent. Do not cook inside a tent. When preparing a campfire, a site should be selected that is away from grass, trees and tents. An area of 10 feet around the campfire should be cleared of ground litter, twigs, leaves, etc. The site should also be downwind from the sleeping area to prevent catching a tent or sleeping bag on fire from a spark or ember. Rocks should be placed directly around the campfire pit.

Before planning for a fire, secure permits from the proper authorities if required. If weather conditions are especially dry, check with the proper authorities to determine if an open-burning ban has been placed into effect. If you really do not need a fire for cooking, do not build one. A small spark is all it takes to ignite dry grass and leaves. Be sure to pay close attention to forest conditions and warnings from authorities.

Never use gasoline to light a fire, it is extremely explosive. A fire should be lit using kindling or a lighter stick. Keep a fire extinguisher, pail of sand or water nearby in the event they are needed to control the fire or extinguish it. Wear tight-fitting cotton clothing while working near the campfire. Always keep a careful eye on fires, never leave them unattended and make sure children do not play near them. Teach everyone the stop, drop and roll concept. Before you go to sleep at night or if you leave the campsite for a while, be sure to extinguish the fire. Many forest fires are started each year from unattended campfires or from those that were not completely extinguished. Douse the fire with water or sand, break up the coals, add more water or sand, stir it with a stick and cover the dead embers with dirt. Once again, make sure the fire is completely out before bedding down or leaving the campsite.

If you are using a gas or liquid fuel camp stove or lantern, follow the manufacturer's directions. Make sure all connections are tight to avoid leaks. Check for leaks with a soapy water solution. If the mixture bubbles, gas is seeping out and the appliance must not be used until repaired by a professional. Never use a lighted match to check for leaking gas. When using a camp stove or lantern, always fill it before each use. Do not refuel a hot stove or lantern. Wait until it cools and use a funnel to fill the appliance, wiping up all spills before re-lighting.

When traveling with a camper or recreational vehicle, use only electrically operated or battery operated lights inside. Maintain all appliances in a safe working order and check them before use. Keep a fire extinguisher on board and install at least one smoke detector. When the vehicle is traveling down the road, shut down gas to stoves and water heaters by closing fuel supply valves at the gas cylinders. Never operate combustion type heaters inside closed campers or recreational vehicles since this could result in asphyxiation from fumes as well as oxygen depletion. Do not cook while the vehicle is underway. Always fuel stoves or lanterns outside and avoid accumulating and storing combustibles.