

Fire Emergencies

What to Do

Prepare in Advance

The best time to think about fire safety is before a fire starts. In an emergency, you probably won't have time to figure out how your fire extinguishers work or where the nearest exit is.

- ◆ Participate in fire drills at least once a year.
- ◆ Learn the location of fire escape routes.
- ◆ Learn the location of and how to activate any fire alarms.
- ◆ Know where fire extinguishers are located and how to use them.

If a Fire Starts

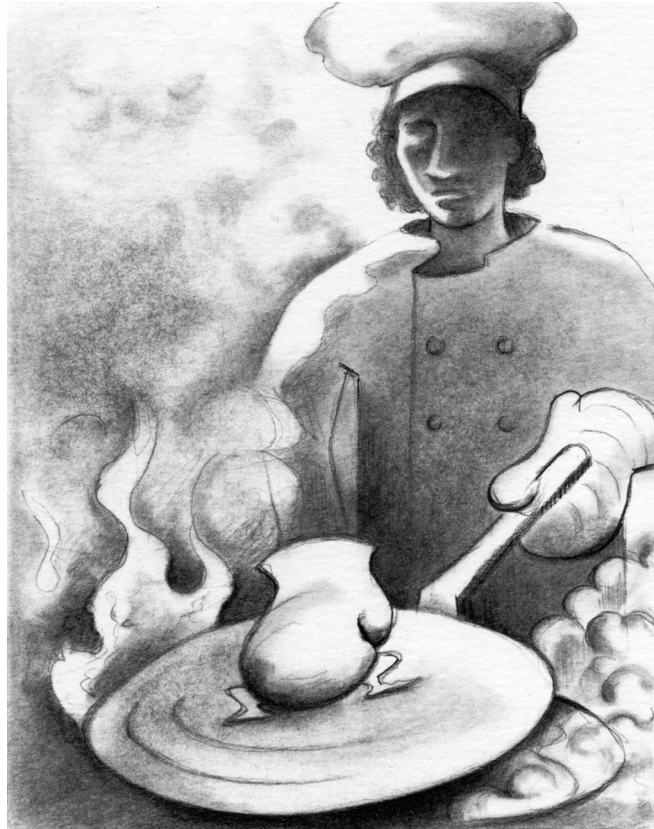
Many small and self-contained fires can be safely extinguished on the spot with the appropriate fire extinguisher. If you're in doubt, sound the alarm for evacuation immediately and call the fire department from outside of the building.

For your safety during a fire, use an extinguisher only if:

- ◆ the fire is small.
- ◆ you have an escape route.
- ◆ you know how to use the extinguisher.
- ◆ you're certain the extinguisher is the right size and type for the fire.

Extinguishing a Fire

Fire needs three ingredients: heat, fuel and oxygen. When fuel such as wood or



flammable gas is heated by a spark or other source of heat, it combines rapidly with oxygen and bursts into flame. If you're certain that a small fire poses no immediate threat, you can put it out by removing its fuel, heat or oxygen.

Cool It: Remove Heat

Wood, paper and cloth fires are best cooled with water, but other types of fires require special chemicals to reduce heat and flame. Extinguishers are clearly marked according to the type of fires they can put out. Never use water on grease, electrical or flammable liquid fires.

Grease Fires

- ◆ If a grease fire erupts in a pan, put on an oven mitt, carefully slide the lid over the pan and turn off the heat. Leave the pan on the stove until it's completely cool.
- ◆ Never attempt to extinguish a grease fire with water—this can spread the fire by scattering grease.
- ◆ Use wet towels to smother flames.

Starve It: Remove Fuel

A fire's fuel might be paper, wood, grease, solvents or gas. Removing the fuel from a fire can be dangerous, but there are exceptions. For example, you can extinguish burning gas that flows from a pipe by turning off the gas valve.

Smother It: Remove Oxygen

In order for a fire to burn, it normally needs air that's at least 15 percent oxygen. Covering a pan of flaming food or closing an oven door cuts off the oxygen supply and smothers the flames. Some fire extinguishers use chemicals, powders or liquefied gases to blanket a fire and remove its oxygen supply.