



Preventing Fires at Apartment Communities — What Can I Do?

Year after year apartment communities are affected by fires that cause significant property loss and damage, and force families to relocate. The two most common causes of apartment community fires are:

- Improperly discarded cigarettes
- Unattended cooking

These fires are preventable; below is information about what you can do.

Improperly Discarded Cigarettes

If you smoke, make sure you properly dispose of cigarettes. Ensure you:

- Use a deep, sturdy ashtray and place it away from anything that can burn.
- Don't discard cigarettes in vegetation such as mulch, potted plants, landscaping, peat moss, dried grass, leaves or any other items that can ignite easily.
- Before you throw away cigarette butts and ashes, make sure they are out.
- Dousing the smoking material in water or sand is the best way to ensure it is fully extinguished.

Unattended Cooking Fires

The most common cause of cooking fires is leaving what you're preparing unattended. Make sure you:

- Never cook when you're tired, medicated or intoxicated.
- Stay in the kitchen when frying food or cooking with oil or grease.
- Keep kids at least three feet from the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.
- Keep a lid and an oven mitt nearby when you are cooking. If a small fire erupts in the pan, slide the lid over the pan, turn off the stove and let the pan cool. In case of an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you. After a fire, the oven should be checked and/or serviced before being used again.

Additional Information

Here are some additional tips that can help prevent fires at apartment communities (and ensure the community is not violating the fire code):

- Make sure you keep grills far away (at least 10 feet) from combustible materials. Follow apartment regulations listed in your lease agreement.
- Ensure fire extinguishers are maintained properly.
- Ensure dryer vents are maintained properly.
- Avoid storing combustible materials in exits or enclosures for stairways and ramps.