

## True Story – Kitchen Fire

Just because you know about safety does not mean your family knows. A close associate of SCM called us the other day to relate a true story that illustrates this. His wife was fixing dinner. She set a pan with a few tablespoons of oil on the stove to heat up while she chopped the vegetables. The oil caught fire. Not knowing what to do, she threw some water on the fire. It splattered up the back of the stove. Black smoke was now filling the air. She ordered the children out of the room, then threw some wet paper towels on the pan. Fortunately, while not the correct thing to do, it was enough to put out the fire and avert a tragedy. Our associate spent some time that evening teaching what he knew about fire safety to his family. His wife had lots of training in cooking, but no training on how to extinguish a small stove fire.

From what you have heard in recent safety tips, you might remember that water is the wrong thing to use on a grease or oil fire. As in our story, it causes the fire to splatter, which can result in the fire spreading quickly beyond the pan. When the fire is contained in a pot or pan, the better extinguishing system is to turn off the stove and put a lid on the pan. If you think about the recipe for a fire - fuel + heat + air + chemical reaction - turning off the stove and putting a lid on the pan will reduce the heat and air, disrupting the required elements for a fire, and effectively putting it out.

Certainly a fire extinguisher is an important piece of safety equipment that is useful at home. It is best kept in the same location for use at home as it would be at your work site - near the way to get out. If a fire is big enough that you would want to use a fire extinguisher, you want to make sure that the door is close enough that you can get out if the fire gets beyond your ability to extinguish it. Our personal extinguisher at home is just outside the door in the garage. Why? 2 reasons. We always know where it is, and we won't fight a fire unless we know we can get out.

And the one thing that our associate's wife did that was very good in the story was to get the children out and away from danger. There is a specific order of what to do when there's a fire. It does not matter if the fire is at work or at home. The order of what to do is:

- 1) Evacuate - get everyone out. This means that there's a specific place to go when they get out. Children should know that they must go stand by a certain tree, the end of the driveway, or the mail box - someplace that you will be able to find and account for them when you join them. Make a game out of the learning process, to lessen any fear they may have when you talk about fire.

- 2) Call the fire department. You hear about it everyday, that even small children can dial 9-1-1. Remember that if you use cell phones as your main phone line at home, to find the direct number to your local emergency dispatch center and program it into your phone.
- 3) If you know how to use a fire extinguisher, and if the fire is small and has not spread beyond the area where it originated, use the appropriately rated fire extinguisher to put out the fire.

Remember that using a fire extinguisher involves the **P-A-S-S-S** system:

**P**ull the pin

**A**im at the base of the fire

**S**queeze the handle

**S**weep back and forth at the base of the fire until the fire is out.

**S**tay and watch it. Make sure the fire does not start again. If it does, use the extinguisher again.

You might have heard that it is not good to take your work home with you. But safety is the one thing you need to take home. It is often said in management circles that the best employee is the one that can focus on work because they know their family is safe. But just because you know what to do to stay safe, does not mean that your family automatically will know what to do. You have to train them, just as you have been trained.

Take safety home - the lives of your family might depend on it!