

CRS Emergency Preparedness Newsletter

July 2026

Fire Safety A Few Minutes Now Can Save a Life Later

This month's goal: check alarms, know how to use extinguishers, reduce kitchen fire risk, improve safety for older neighbors, and make our homes and yards less likely to ignite.

Introduction

Fire safety is one of those topics that seems obvious until we look closely at: how fast a room fire can grow, how often cooking is involved, how much higher the risk is for older adults, and how many simple things we can do before an emergency.

Clallam County July Fire Safety Reminder

July preparedness includes smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fuel storage, defensible space, matches and smoking safety, heating sources, electrical wiring, power-restoration hazards, fire escape plans, and how to use a fire extinguisher.

Start With Two Short Videos

Under 3-minute fire safety video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAltyfQ6qGs>

Two-minute video on how to use a fire extinguisher:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCSms-jyOao&t=2s>

A good reminder from Clallam Ready Sequim's First Aid class: when you enter a building or public place, practice **situational awareness**. Notice the exits, fire extinguishers, and defibrillators.

July Fire Safety: Clallam County's Prepare in a Year Reminder

Clallam County's July "Prepare in a Year" fire safety topic highlights several areas every household should review:

- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Fuel storage
- Defensible space
- Matches and smoking
- Heating sources
- Electrical wiring
- Hazards when power comes back on
- Fire escape plans
- How to use a fire extinguisher using P.A.S.S.

Why July Is a Good Month for Fire Safety

By July, grasses, shrubs, leaves, and stored yard debris are drying out. This year, the reminder came even earlier: Clallam County burn restrictions took effect on **June 24, 2026** and are scheduled to remain in effect through **October 1, 2026**, unless conditions change. The restrictions apply to outdoor burning, with limited recreational fires still allowed unless extreme weather conditions lead to a stricter ban. Recreational fires are limited to **3 feet in diameter and 2 feet in height**, and fires for debris disposal are **not legal under any circumstances**.

Even though Sequim is not eastern Washington, we can still have dry spells, wind, smoke, roadside fires, and brush fires. The City of Sequim's notice adds that if conditions are upgraded to **high fire danger**, all outdoor burning may be prohibited, including recreational fires. Clallam County also notes that a higher fire danger level can prohibit recreational fires and charcoal briquets, so it is important to check current restrictions before burning, using charcoal, or assuming that last week's rules still apply.

Recent local reminders: [Sequim Gazette article: Burn restrictions take effect](#)

- Clallam County burn restrictions began June 24 and are expected to run through October 1 unless conditions change.
- Recreational fires may be allowed only if conditions permit, and they must stay within the size limit.
- Burning yard debris is not allowed during the restriction period.
- Fire danger can increase quickly enough that recreational fires and charcoal may also be prohibited.
- The Department of Natural Resources is preparing for a busy 2026 fire season.
- Multiple brush fires were reported along Highway 101 east of Port Angeles in June.
- Fire risk is not only a "forest" issue. Most of the risks we can control are at home: cooking, alarms, extinguishers, clutter, yard debris, grills, propane, fuel storage, electrical safety, and evacuation readiness.
- Interactive fire and smoke map: <https://wasmoke.blogspot.com>

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are among the simplest and most important safety devices in the home. July tasks:

- Test smoke alarms.
- Test carbon monoxide alarms.
- Replace batteries if needed.
- Check expiration dates.
- Make sure alarms can be heard from bedrooms.
- Consider strobe-light or bed-shaker alarms for anyone with hearing loss.
- Ask a caregiver, neighbor, or family member to help if you cannot safely reach your alarms.

Caregivers should check the smoke alarms of those who are unable to do it themselves. If you can't hear your smoke alarm, consider getting one that has a different sound or one that comes with a bed shaker or strobe light.

Fire Escape Plans: Get Out and Stay Out

A fire escape plan should be simple enough to remember under stress.

Key reminders:

- Know at least two ways out of your home.
- Know the location of all exits, including windows.
- If the nearest exit is blocked by fire, heat, or smoke, use another exit.
- If you must escape through a closed door, check it for heat first. Use the back of your hand to feel the top of the door, the doorknob, and the crack between the door and frame.
- If the door is hot, do not open it.
- If caught in smoke, get low and crawl. Breathe shallowly through your nose and use a shirt or jacket as a filter if needed.
- If you cannot escape, close the door, stay low, and signal from a window with a light-colored sheet or cloth.
- Close doors behind you as you leave if you can do so safely. This can slow smoke and fire spread.
- Once outside, do not go back in for any reason.
- Call 911 once you are outside, or from a neighbor's house.
- Pick an outdoor meeting place so everyone knows where to gather.

Evacuate from the Second Story

- Use the stairs first. Only do this if they are completely clear.
- Deploy an escape ladder. Hook it securely to a window frame.
- Drop the ladder outside. Ensure it extends fully to the ground.
- Exit backward down ladders. Face the building as you climb down.

Fire Extinguishers: Have More Than One

A fire extinguisher is most useful when it is close, visible, and easy to reach. It is good to have multiple extinguishers, for example:

- Kitchen
- Garage
- Near the front door.
- Workshop or utility area
- RV, boat, or vehicle if applicable

Placing the extinguisher outside has a special purpose: **in an emergency, place it outside by the front door, the mailbox or near the street.** This lets you evacuate first and then have an extinguisher available from a safer location. It may also help a neighbor or responder.

The commonly recommended home extinguisher type is an **ABC-rated extinguisher**, which can be used on ordinary combustibles, flammable liquids, and electrical fires. The First Alert extinguisher is a top-rated common choice. At the time this newsletter was prepared, a First Alert fire extinguisher was available at Costco for about **\$30**, reportedly \$10 off the usual price.

Remember: use a fire extinguisher only if the fire is small, you have a clear exit behind you, and you know how to use it. If there is any doubt, get out and call 911.

Fire extinguishers are like radios: useful only if you can find them, reach them, and know how to use them

How to Use a Fire Extinguisher: P.A.S.S.

Use the P.A.S.S. reminder:

- **Pull** the pin.
- **Aim** low at the base of the fire.
- **Squeeze** the handle.
- **Sweep** side to side.

Do not try to fight a large or spreading fire. Do not fight a fire if smoke is building, if you are not sure what is burning, or if you do not have a clear escape path.

Electrical Fires and Power-Restoration Hazards

Electrical fires need special caution. If it is safe to do so, shut off electricity at the main breaker. If the power cannot be shut off, **do not use water** on the fire.

After an outage, when power comes back on, watch for hazards:

- Appliances or burners that were left on.
- Damaged cords or outlets.
- Sparking, smoke, or burning smells.
- Overloaded power strips.
- Extension cords used as permanent wiring.
- Space heaters placed too close to furniture, curtains, or bedding.

If you see sparks, smell burning, or suspect damaged wiring, turn off power if safe and call for help.

Kitchen Fire Safety

Cooking is one of the most common sources of home fires. A few habits make a big difference.

Basic cooking safety:

- Stay in the room when frying, grilling, or broiling.
- Use a loud timer when baking or simmering.
- Wear fitted clothing. Avoid loose sleeves, robes, or scarves.

- Turn pot and pan handles inward.
- Keep towels, paper, packaging, and other flammable items at least 3 feet from burners.
- Keep the path to the kitchen clear of tripping hazards.
- Never use water on a grease or oil fire.
- Smother a grease fire with a metal lid, baking soda, or a fire extinguisher.
- Turn off the burner if you can do so safely.
- Leave the lid in place until the pan is completely cool.

Induction Cooktops: A Safer Option for Many Seniors

Consider switching to an induction cooktop, especially for people at higher risk of burns, clothing ignition, or accidentally leaving the stove on.

Advantages of induction cooktops:

- **Cooler surface:** Induction uses magnetic energy to heat the cookware directly. The glass surface does not get as dangerously hot as a traditional burner.
- **No open flame:** Removing gas flames reduces the risk of clothing ignition and kitchen fires.
- **Fast shutoff:** Heat stops quickly when the pan is removed.
- **Flat surface:** Heavy pots can slide across the cooktop instead of being lifted.
- **Good for smaller meals:** Portable single-burner induction units are available and may be easier than replacing an entire stove.

For existing electric or gas stoves, consider automatic shut-off devices such as FireAvert or SmartRange. These can shut off power when a smoke alarm sounds or when motion patterns suggest the stove may have been left unattended.

Fire Blankets: Useful in More Places Than the Kitchen

A fire blanket can be used to smother a small fire by cutting off oxygen. Common places to keep one include:

- Kitchen
- Car
- Garage
- Near the breaker box
- Near the barbecue

Fire blanket information: <https://www.fireprotectiononline.co.uk/info/3-ways-to-use-a-fire-blanket/>

The usual retail brand is Prepared Hero, at about \$20 per blanket. Amazon also offers a different brand for about \$4 per blanket, but only with a 24-blanket order.

Propane Safety: Inspect, Shut Off, and Stabilize

Propane fire safety should include a quick propane check. At least once a year, have propane tanks, regulators, valves, flexible connectors, and appliance connections inspected by a qualified propane technician or supplier. Also do a simple homeowner check each season: look for rust, damaged lines, leaning tanks, vegetation around the tank, or anything that could fall onto the propane system.

Know where your propane shutoff valve is and make sure household members know how to turn it off if there is a leak, fire, or earthquake damage. Consider asking your propane supplier about an automatic seismic shutoff valve or excess-flow protection, especially if the tank or piping could be damaged in an earthquake.

Propane tanks should be stable, upright, and secured against tipping or sliding. After a major earthquake, do not use matches, lighters, light switches, or appliances if you smell gas. Leave the area, call 911 or the propane supplier from a safe location, and do not turn the propane back on until the system has been checked by a professional.

July propane safety tasks:

- Find and label your propane shutoff valve.
- Make sure the tank is upright, stable, and not likely to move in an earthquake.
- Clear dry grass, weeds, and flammable material from around the tank.
- Check that propane lines are protected from falling branches, stored items, or vehicle impact.
- Ask your propane supplier whether your system should have an automatic seismic shutoff valve.
- Schedule a professional inspection if the system has not been inspected recently.

Fuel Storage, Matches, Smoking, and Heating Sources

Review where flammable items are stored. Fuel, solvents, gasoline, propane cylinders, oily rags, and other combustibles should be stored safely, away from heat sources and ignition sources.

Check:

- Gasoline and fuel containers are approved and tightly closed.
- Fuel is stored away from living areas when possible.
- Matches and lighters are kept away from children and unsafe locations.
- Cigarettes and smoking materials are fully extinguished and never discarded in dry grass, planters, bark, or trash.
- Space heaters are kept at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.
- Fireplaces and wood stoves are cleaned and used safely.
- Ashes are placed in a metal container, away from the house, deck, garage, or dry vegetation.

Older Adults Are at Higher Risk

FEMA reports that older adults have a significantly higher risk of dying in a fire than the general population.

For 2023:

- Ages 65–74 had 2.2 times the risk of dying in a fire.
- Ages 75–84 had 2.9 times the risk.
- Ages 85 and over had the highest relative risk.

The 10-year fire death rate trend from 2014–2023 increased 41% for adults ages 65–74 and 16% for adults ages 75–84.

This matters for many neighborhoods in Sequim. Many residents are older adults, who may have hearing, mobility, vision, balance, or memory challenges.

Practical steps:

- Caregivers should check smoke alarms for people who cannot safely reach them.
- If someone cannot hear a standard smoke alarm, consider one with a different sound, strobe light, or bed shaker.
- Make sure walking paths are clear, especially between the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and exits.
- Keep a phone, flashlight, glasses, shoes, and medications easy to reach at night.

Fire Safety Checklist for Older Adults:

<https://www.ccf3.org/safety-for-seniors-disabled>

Fire-Safe Landscaping and Defensible Space

Fire-safe landscaping does not mean removing all plants. It means reducing the chance that a spark or ember can spread to the house.

Focus first on the area closest to the home:

- Remove dead leaves, needles, and dry grass near the foundation.
- Keep gutters and roof valleys clear.
- Move firewood, lumber, cardboard, and propane cylinders away from the house when practical.
- Trim shrubs or branches that touch siding, decks, fences, or the roof.
- Keep address numbers visible from the street.
- Keep garden hoses connected and easy to reach.
- Remove dry debris from under decks and outdoor furniture.
- Store fuel and flammable materials away from the house when possible.

Clallam County fire-safe landscaping information:

<https://www.clallamcountywa.gov/237/Links-Resources>

Smoke Days: Protect Your Lungs

Wildfire smoke can travel long distances. Even if there is no nearby fire, smoke from elsewhere in the region may affect our air quality.

Prepare now:

- Know where your N95 masks are.
- Keep windows closed on smoky days.
- Use a HEPA air purifier if available.
- Consider making one clean-air room in the house.
- Avoid strenuous outdoor work when air quality is poor.
- Check on neighbors with asthma, COPD, heart disease, or other respiratory concerns.
- UC Davis DIY air filter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hluH-2naozl>

July Household Fire-Safety Checklist

☐ Watch the two short fire-safety videos.	☐ Clear dry material from the first few feet around the house.
☐ Test smoke alarms.	☐ Clean gutters or roof debris if safe to do so.
☐ Test carbon monoxide alarms.	☐ Check safe fuel storage.
☐ Check that alarms can be heard from bedrooms.	☐ Keep flammable items 3 feet from burners and heaters.
☐ Place extinguishers in the kitchen, garage, and near the front door.	☐ Review two ways out of the house.
☐ Learn how to use an extinguisher.	☐ Make a five-minute evacuation list.
☐ Consider buying fire blankets for the kitchen, car, garage, and barbecue or utility area.	☐ Check on a neighbor who may need help testing alarms or clearing exits.
☐ Find and label your propane shutoff.	

Useful Local Fire Safety Resources

- Clallam County July Prepare in a Year fire safety page: Uploaded Clallam County PDF included in this document
- Clallam County Fire District 3 home safety resources: <https://www.ccf3.org/home-safety-resources>
- Clallam County Fire District 3 safety for seniors and disabled residents: <https://www.ccf3.org/safety-for-seniors-disabled>
- Clallam County wildfire preparedness and fire-safe landscaping resources: <https://www.clallamcountywa.gov/237/Links-Resources>

- Sequim Gazette: Burn restrictions take effect: <https://www.sequimgazette.com/2026/06/24/burn-restrictions-take-effect/>
- Department of Natural Resources preparing for busy fire season: <https://www.peninsuladailynews.com/2026/06/18/department-of-natural-resources-is-preparing-for-busy-fire-season/>
- Multiple brush fires along Highway 101 east of Port Angeles: <https://www.myclallamcounty.com/2026/06/18/multiple-brush-fires-prompt-response-along-highway-101-east-of-port-angeles/>

Closing Thought

Fire safety ***is*** neighborhood preparedness. A working smoke alarm, a clear exit, a nearby extinguisher, a fire blanket, safe fuel storage, a known propane shutoff, and a few feet of cleared space around the house are small things—but small things done before an emergency can save lives. The best fire plan is the one that prevents the fire from becoming a neighborhood meeting topic.

Prepare in a Year

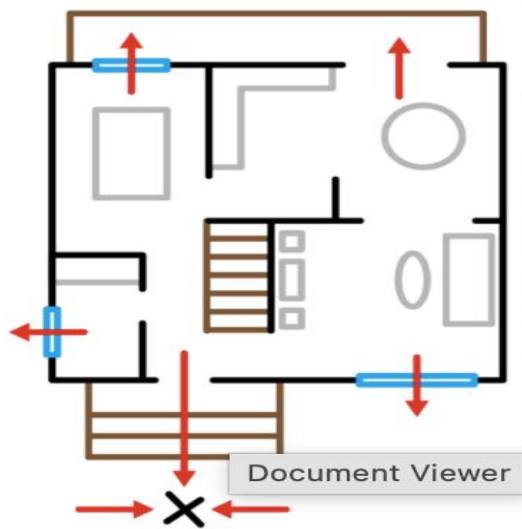


Exiting Buildings

- If there is a fire or when the smoke detectors or carbon monoxide detectors sounds, leave immediately!
- Do not try to fight the fire. Once outside, **do not re-enter the home for any reason!**
- Call 911 from a cell phone once outside, or from a neighbor's house.
- Know the location of all exits including the windows. (If you live in an apartment, count the number of doorways between your apartment and the two nearest exits. This will help you leave safely in the dark).
- If the nearest exit is blocked by fire, heat or smoke go to another exit.
- If you must escape through a closed door, check for heat before opening it. Use the back of your hand to feel the top of the door, the doorknob, and the crack between the door and door frame before you open it. If it is hot, do not open it and escape through a window.
- If your clothes catch fire, "stop, drop and roll" until the fire is out.
- If caught in smoke: drop to your

7. Fire Safety





Practicing fire safety

Choose a safe place outside your home to reunite with your family. Regularly remind all household members of the location. Draw the floor plan of your home and discuss two ways to exit each room. Hold a fire drill at least twice each year.

Electrical Fires

1. Shut off the electricity at the main breaker.
2. Put out the fire by using an extinguisher, dirt, or water. **CAUTION:** If the electricity cannot be shut off, **DO NOT** use water on the fire.

Oil or Grease Fires

- Use baking soda, a lid, a bread board or a fire extinguisher to smother the flames.
- **NEVER** use water on a grease or an oil fire.