For many of us, water activities equal fun. But it's important to be aware of electrical hazards while enjoying the water. Know how to be safe around swimming pools, hot tubs, and spas.

- If you are putting in a new pool, hot tub, or spa be sure the wiring is performed by an electrician experienced in the special safety requirements for these types of installations.
- Outdoor receptacles must have covers that keep them dry even when appliances are plugged into them.
- Ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) are special devices designed to protect against electric shock and electrocution. They are required for most pool, spa or hot tub equipment. They may be in the form of an outlet or a circuit breaker. Test the GFCIs monthly according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Electrical appliances, equipment, and cords should be kept at least 6 feet away from the water. When possible, use battery operated appliances and equipment, such as televisions, radios, and stereos.
- Avoid handling electrical devices when you are wet.
- Make sure that any overhead lines maintain the proper distance over a pool and other structures, such as a diving board. If unsure, contact a qualified electrician or your local utility company to make sure power lines are a safe distance away.
- Do not swim during a thunderstorm.
- Have a qualified electrician periodically inspect and—where necessary—replace or upgrade the electrical devices or equipment that keep your pool, spa, or hot tub electrically safe.
- Have a qualified electrician show you how to turn off all power in case of an emergency.

**KNOW THE RISKS!**

Electrocution is death by an electrical shock. Be aware when skin is wet or when surrounding surfaces, such as the grass or pool deck, are wet. Wet skin or wet surfaces can greatly increase the chance of electrocution when electricity is present.

There are several signs of electrical shock. Swimmers may feel a tingling sensation. They may experience muscle cramps. They may not be able to move. They may feel as if something is holding them in place.

If you think someone in the water is being shocked, turn off all power, but do not attempt to go in the water. Use a fiberglass or other kind of rescue hook that doesn’t conduct electricity to help the swimmer. Have someone call 9-1-1.

If you think you are being shocked while in the water move away from the source of the shock. Get out of the water.

**FACT**

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has reports of 14 deaths related to electrocutions in swimming pools from 2003 to 2014. Hot tubs and spas may present the same hazard as swimming pools.

For more information on how to prevent fires, visit www.mcfrs.org/mcsafe

Call 311 for a FREE Home Safety Check
Safety with Oily Rags
wet with flammable or combustible liquid

Oil-based paints, stains, and varnishes are often used for home improvement projects. It is common to use rags to wipe up spills or clean brushes. But wet rags can ignite on their own. They can start a fire if not handled carefully. The same is true of the liquids themselves.

How can rags start a fire?
The oils commonly used in oil-based paints and stains release heat as they dry. If the heat is not released in the air, it builds up. That is why a pile of oily rags can be dangerous. As the rags dry, the heat is trapped. The heat builds up and finally causes a fire. Be aware that this does not happen with water-based finishes.

How can liquids start a fire?
Vapors from flammable and combustible liquids can ignite, causing a fire. There are many commonly used flammable liquids. Gasoline, lacquers, and nail polish are just a few examples. There are many commonly used combustible liquids. Paint thinner, kerosene, and oil-based paints and stains are some examples.

Rags Wet with Paint and Stain
- Never leave cleaning rags in a pile. At the end of the day, take the rags outside to dry.
- Hang the rags outside or spread them on the ground. Weigh them down. Do this so they do not blow away. Make sure they are not in a pile. Keep them away from buildings.
- Put dried rags in a metal container. Make sure the cover is tight. Fill the container with a water and detergent solution. This will break down the oils.
- Keep containers of oily rags in a cool place. Keep them out of direct sunlight. Keep them away from other heat sources. Check with your town for information on disposing of them.

Liquids That Can Catch Fire
- Flammable and combustible liquids should not be used near an open flame. Do not smoke when working with these liquids.
- If you spill liquids on your clothing, remove your clothing and place it outside to dry. Once dry, clothing can be laundered.
- Keep liquids in their original containers. Keep them tightly capped or sealed. Never store the liquids in glass containers.

Gasoline
- Use gasoline only as motor fuel. Never use it as a cleaner. Never use it to break down grease. Never bring gasoline indoors, even in small amounts.
- Store gasoline ONLY in a container that is sold for that purpose. Make sure the container is tightly capped when not in use. NEVER store gasoline containers in a basement or in the occupied space of a building. Keep them in an outbuilding, a detached garage, or a shed outdoors.

For more information on how to prevent fires, visit www.mcfars.org/mcsafe

Call 311 for a FREE Home Safety Check

Facts

💡 An average of 1,600 home fires per year are caused by instances of spontaneous combustion or chemical reaction

⚠️ An average of 800 home fires per year are started when oily rags catch fire or are ignited.
COOL YOUR ASHES!

Every year “cold ashes” result in house fires.

FACT: Many people don’t realize the length of time required for ashes to cool enough for disposal. Coals and ashes from fires can remain hot enough to reignite and start a fire for many days after the fire is out. The exact amount of time for complete extinguishment and cooling depends on many factors such as how hot the fire was, what was burning, how much unburned fuel remains, etc.

BE SAFE: Treat ALL ashes and coals as HOT ashes, even when you think they had time enough to cool. Take care to dispose of them wisely. Your house, deck or garage are unsafe locations for storing ashes while they cool and have been the site of many recent and devastating fires both locally and nationally. Store cooled ashes in a tightly covered metal container and keep it outside and at least 10 feet from your home or nearby buildings.

Montgomery County Fire Officials Recommend These Top 5 Safety Tips:

**DO NOT**

- remove hot ashes from a fireplace immediately. When possible, allow ashes and coals to cool in the area where you had the fire for several days. These devices are designed to contain their heat safely.

When it’s time to dispose of the ashes, transfer them to a metal container and wet them down. Only use an approved metal ash bucket that has a tight fitting metal lid to safely store cooled ashes. **NEVER** dispose of ashes in a paper or plastic bag, cardboard box, plastic container or bucket because it can easily ignite and **DO NOT** place any other combustibles in the metal container.

**DO NOT**

- dispose of ashes outside on a windy day. The wind can whip up what may have seemed like cool embers, making them fiery hot and sending them airborne which could ignite nearby combustibles.

Store the container OUTSIDE, away from your house and other structures including garages, decks, porches, fences, wood piles or other combustible materials.

**NEVER**

- use a vacuum cleaner to pick up ashes.

Call 311 for a **FREE** Home Safety Check

SCOTT E. GOLDSTEIN
Montgomery County Fire Chief
www.mcfrrs.org/mcsafe
Maryland Updates Smoke Alarm Law

Important Information You Need to Know

1. Maryland’s new smoke alarm law requires the replacement of all BATTERY-ONLY operated smoke alarms with units powered by sealed-in, 10-year long-life batteries.

2. All smoke alarms have expiration dates. Both hard-wired and battery-operated smoke alarms need to be replaced every ten years. If your smoke alarm has not been replaced since 2007, it’s time!

3. Location, location, location – smoke alarms are required to be located outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home including basements (finished or unfinished).

4. For homes constructed since 1994, smoke alarms have been required inside all sleeping rooms. For maximum protection, fire officials recommend installing smoke alarms in sleeping rooms regardless of the year of construction.

5. Homeowners have until January 1, 2018 to comply with the new law. Any resident requiring information or assistance can call 3-1-1.

For more information or to learn about our FREE Home Safety Program, visit:

www.mcfrs.org/mcsafe

It’s the law.
High-rise Apartment & Condominium Safety

People living in a high-rise apartment or condominium building need to think ahead and be prepared in the event of a fire. It is important to know the fire safety features in your building and work together with neighbors to help keep the building as fire-safe as possible.

BE PREPARED!

- For the best protection, select a fully sprinklered building. If your building is not sprinklered, ask the landlord or management to consider installing a sprinkler system.
- Meet with your landlord or building manager to learn about the fire safety features in your building (fire alarms, sprinklers, voice communication procedures, evacuation plans and how to respond to an alarm).
- Know the locations of all available exit stairs from your floor in case the nearest one is blocked by fire or smoke.
- Make sure all exit and stairwell doors are clearly marked, not locked or blocked by security bars and clear of clutter.
- If there is a fire, pull the fire alarm on your way out to notify the fire department and your neighbors.
- If the fire alarm sounds, feel the door before opening and close all doors behind you as you leave. If it is hot, use another way out. If it is cool, leave by the nearest way out.
- If an announcement is made throughout the building, listen carefully and follow directions.
- Use the stairs to get out — never use the elevator unless you are directed to by the fire department.

ESCAPE 101

GO to your outside meeting place and stay there. Call the fire department. If someone is trapped in the building, notify the fire department.

If you can't get out of your apartment because of fire, smoke or a disability, STUFF wet towels or sheets around the door and vents to keep smoke out.

CALL the fire department and tell them where you are.

OPEN a window slightly and wave a bright cloth to signal your location. Be prepared to close the window if it makes the smoke condition worse.

Fire department evacuation of a high-rise building can take a long time. Communicate with the fire department to monitor evacuation status.

FACT

High-rise buildings are more likely to have sprinklers and fire alarm equipment than other non-high-rise buildings.

Call 311 for a FREE Home Safety Check

SCOTT E. GOLDSTEIN
Montgomery County Fire Chief
www.mcrfs.org/mcsafe
Often called the silent killer, carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) burn incompletely. In the home, heating and cooking equipment that burn fuel can be sources of carbon monoxide.

- CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home and in other locations where required by applicable laws, codes or standards. For the best protection, interconnect all CO alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for placement and mounting height.
- Choose a CO alarm that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Call your local fire department’s non-emergency number to find out what number to call if the CO alarm sounds.
- Test CO alarms at least once a month; replace them according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- If the audible trouble signal sounds, check for low batteries. If the battery is low, replace it. If it still sounds, call the fire department.
- If the CO alarm sounds, immediately move to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door. Make sure everyone inside the home is accounted for. Call for help from a fresh air location and stay there until emergency personnel.
- If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.
- A generator should be used in a well-ventilated location outdoors away from windows, doors and vent openings.
- Gas or charcoal grills can produce CO — only use outside.

**FACTS**

- A person can be poisoned by a small amount of CO over a longer period of time or by a large amount of CO over a shorter amount of time.
- In 2005, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 61,100 non-fire CO incidents in which carbon monoxide was found, or an average of seven calls per hour.

Call 311 for a FREE Home Safety Check

Scott E. Goldstein
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www.mcfws.org/mcsafe