

RV Fire Safety: A Critical Survival Issue

Heads up: we are in the middle of home fire disaster season. That includes RV home fires. While summer is peak season for wildfires, winter is peak season for home fires. Those of us who joined the DOVE rally at Quartzsite on January 22 this year got a sober reminder about how vulnerable our RVs are to fire. As we sat around the campfire in the evening, we heard what we assumed were firecrackers going off about ½ mile away. It wasn't firecrackers—it was an explosion and fire in someone's RV which totally destroyed the RV and ended the owner's plans to travel and have fun.

This weekend presents a higher risk of RV fire danger. Why? Because it is Super Bowl Sunday. We can be distracted by the football game and presence of friends, forgetting to monitor the stove, using unsafe space heaters, placing lit candles too close to furniture and combustible materials, being careless with lighted cigarettes, and generally ignoring basic fire safety rules.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, RV fire safety guru Mac McCoy and others, these are the **BASIC SAFETY RULES FOR PREVENTING/PREPARING FOR RV FIRES:**

1. Know your location, keep cell phones charged. Be prepared to tell the 911 operator or fire department how to find you.
2. Keep at least **2 ABC** fire extinguishers inside your RV—place one in the galley, one in the bedroom. Keep at least **1 ABC** fire extinguisher in an outside bay or tow vehicle. Know how to use your fire extinguishers, show all adults in the RV how to use them, inspect them 1 x month.
3. Place smoke detectors in the front and rear of your RV. Be sure they have fresh batteries. Test them 1 x month.
4. Inspect the RV's transmission, engine compartments, wires and hoses, generators, batteries, propane tanks and underside 1 x month for damage/wear. Engine and electrical malfunctions are the cause of **70%** of RV fires. Get a professional inspection if you see or suspect problems.
5. Check tires and brakes 1 x month. These account for **20%** of RV fires.
6. Never leave a stove unattended when cooking. Don't use the stove to heat the RV.
7. Make an escape plan now, practice it 1 x month with everyone who is traveling in your RV. Keep 2 escape routes open in the RV, keep flashlights ready and handy for immediate use.

BASIC RULES FOR RESPONDING TO A RV FIRE:

1. If you can't put out a fire in 30 seconds, get out, let professionals deal with it.
2. Save lives first, property second.
3. Exit quickly, stay low, don't re-enter. Avoid breathing smoke—most deaths occur from smoke inhalation, not burns.
4. Activate the escape plan you developed prior to the fire, confirm that everyone/pets are safely out, call Red Cross/friends/relatives for help and support.

Check the Internet for additional information and resources.

Anita Laffey, SKP #72511 February 2011