



October 2009

Facilities Department Advisory, Candle Safety

The tranquil setting of a flickering candle can quickly become a towering inferno without the proper safety precautions.

Damage from churches fires range from a few thousand dollars to destruction costing millions of dollars – all as a result of misuse of candles. The average damage from a candle-related fire in a church is \$100,000. The majority of candle fires start in an unoccupied room and are not detected until the fire has spread.

Upon investigation, three main causes of candle fires quickly jump to the forefront:

1. Candles left unattended
2. Candles too close to flammable materials
3. Candles tipping over

Candle Safety Rules

- Always keep a burning candle within sight. Extinguish all candles when leaving Church. (Exception: Sanctuary Candle and Devotional Candles)
- Sanctuary Candle, Candleholders, Candle Stands, and Candle Racks should never be placed on carpeting or other flammable flooring. There should be a minimum of 24" of non-flammable flooring (e.g. tile, brick, concrete) from the outside edges of Candle Racks and Candle Stands. If Sanctuary Candle, Candleholders, Candle Stands, and Candle Racks are placed against the wall, the wall surface should be non-flammable. The ideal wall surface is ceramic tile, as ceramic tile is non-flammable and soot can easily be cleaned off. The tile should extend 24" from the side edges of the stand or rack.
- Do not leave matches or mechanical lighters for Devotional Candles. Have available long wood lighting sticks. Discard short lighting sticks. Make sure there is a container of sand attached to the rack or stand for extinguishing the stick.
- Keep candles out of the reach of children. Children should not be allowed to light Devotional Candles without adult supervision.
- Consider using electric candles for Devotional Candles.
- Always use Candleholders, Candle Stands, and Candle Racks specifically designed for candle use.
- Be sure the Candleholders, Candle Stands, and Candle Racks are placed on a stable, heat-resistant surface. Do not place any of these on cloth, placemats, paper, or cardboard.
- Never burn a candle on or near anything that can catch fire. Place candles away from drapes, carpets, artwork, books, paper, cardboard, flammable decorations, etc.
- Don't place lighted candles, Candleholders, Candle Stands and Candle Racks in aisle ways, fire exit paths, or fire exits.
- Do not place Candleholders, Candle Stands, and Candle Racks where they might be knocked over by children or use for bracing by the elderly.
- Always read and follow the manufacturer's use and safety instructions carefully.

- Trim candlewicks to ¼ inch each time before burning. Long or crooked wicks cause uneven burning and dripping.
- The holder should be heat resistant, sturdy, and large enough to contain drips or melted wax. This will also help prevent possible heat damage to underlying surfaces and prevent glass containers from cracking or breaking.
- Keep the wax pool free of wick trimmings, matches and debris at all times.
- Do not burn a candle longer than the manufacturer recommends.
- Keep burning candles away from drafts, vents, ceiling fans, and air currents. This will help prevent rapid, uneven burning, and avoid flame flare-ups and soot build-up. Drafts can also blow lightweight curtains or papers into the flame where they could catch fire.
- Always burn candles in a well-ventilated room.
- Don't burn too many candles in a small room or in a "tight" home where air exchange is limited, which could cause a build-up of Carbon Monoxide to dangerous levels.
- Don't burn a candle all the way down. Extinguish the flame if it comes too close to the holder or container. For a margin of safety, discontinue burning a candle when 2 inches of wax remains or ½ inch if in a container.
- Never touch or move a burning candle when the wax is liquid.
- Never use a knife or sharp object to remove wax drippings from a glass holder. It might scratch, weaken, or cause the glass to break upon subsequent use.
- Place burning candles at least three inches apart. This ensures they won't melt one another, or create drafts that can cause the candles to flare.
- Use a snuffer to extinguish a candle. It's the safest way to prevent hot wax splatters.
- Never extinguish candles with water. The water can cause the hot wax to splatter and might cause a glass container to break.
- Be very careful if using candles during a power outage. Flashlights and other battery-powered lights are safer sources of light during a power failure.
- Make sure a candle is completely extinguished and the wick is no longer glowing before leaving the room.
- Extinguish a candle if it flickers repeatedly, smokes, or the flame becomes too high. The candle isn't burning properly. Let it cool, trim the wick, check for drafts, and then re-light.
- It is best to use American-made candles, as they are highly regulated against the use of lead and other toxins in their content.
- Oxygen tanks are to be kept away from the candles, people using oxygen for respiratory purposes will stay away from open flames
- A 10lb. ABC Fire Extinguisher should be available at the Candle Stands and Racks

From and liability standpoint:

Unsafe use of candles and open flames should be avoided. The use of events involving candles or open flames other than well controlled situations (such as votives in racks designed for the purpose, etc.) *are potentially high risk. Placement of candles on the ground, on stands below waist-level, or at temporary shrines are considered high risk and should be avoided.* Candlelight services, prayer services, youth ministry events, Taize services, and the like must be carefully assessed and controlled.