Office Fire Safety

This client handout provides information and guidance on office fire safety based on the historical trends related to office fires, as provided in the report, US Structure Fires in Office Occupancies, published by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), in August of 2013.

Electrical equipment causes more than 12 percent of office property fires. The following recommendations can help reduce the likelihood of electrical equipment fires:

- Remove combustible materials, such as trashcans, paper, and cardboard boxes, from the area in front of and to the sides of outlets, panel boxes, or other heat-producing electrical equipment.
- Limit the use of extension cords to only those instances when fixed wiring is not available.
- Inspect extension cords for damage frequently. Check light fixtures, bulbs, and displays for visible signs for damage.

Intentionally-set fires account for ten percent of office fires and 20 percent of the property losses. The following recommendations can help reduce the likelihood of intentionally-set fires:

- Implement a security and an emergency management program, including evacuation procedures, building access control, and regular guard tours.
- Conduct periodic emergency drills.
- Provide adequate illumination in all areas of the property, including parking lots and garages.

Heating equipment is responsible for more than 11 percent of office fires. The following recommendations can help reduce the likelihood of heating equipment fires:

- Have heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment serviced by a qualified technician at least annually and before each seasonal startup.
- Prohibit the use of portable space heaters.
- Keep combustible materials at least 3 ft (9 m) from boilers, furnaces, and other heating units.

Smoking causes more than five percent of office fires. The following recommendations can help reduce the likelihood of smoking-related fires:

- Prohibit smoking in the building.
- Provide non-combustible containers outside each entranceway for disposal of smoking materials.
- Install smoke detection equipment in areas subject to unauthorized smoking, such as bathrooms and closets.

Cooking equipment causes nearly 29 percent of office fires. The following recommendations can help reduce the likelihood of cooking equipment fires:

- Ensure office kitchen areas are cleaned daily.
- Prohibit the use of “hot plates.”
- Ensure that stoves, ovens, and other cooking equipment are serviced at least annually by a qualified technician.