

### **What causes fires in worship centers?**

Arson is the leading cause of fires at worship centers. A fire may be deliberately set for many reasons, however vandalism and covering up crimes, such as theft, are common reasons that fires are set in worship centers.

Faulty wiring is the second most common cause of fires at worship centers. Many facilities are old and consequently, the wiring may not be adequate to handle the electrical demands of air conditioning, organs and other appliances and equipment found in today's worship centers.

Other common causes of fires at worship centers are faulty lighting, malfunctioning furnaces, cooking equipment and careless use of candles and Christmas decorations.

### **How can we prevent or minimize fire damage in worship centers?**

The inside of this brochure contains a checklist that you and your congregation can easily review to see how your facility rates for fire safety. In addition to eliminating these potential fire hazards, smoke or heat detectors should be installed throughout your building to provide an early warning in case of fire. Detectors should be cleaned and tested regularly. Portable fire extinguishers should also be placed in your facility to be used in fighting small fires. The Norristown Fire Marshal's Office can advise you as to the type of extinguishers and the recommended locations.

This brochure was developed by the Norristown Fire Department to provide information that will educate the congregation at your worship center that fire may be the greatest danger your house of worship faces today. A serious fire can inflict injury or even death to members of your congregation. A fire could also cause a considerable financial loss to your building as well as its furnishings and an even greater emotional loss for your members.

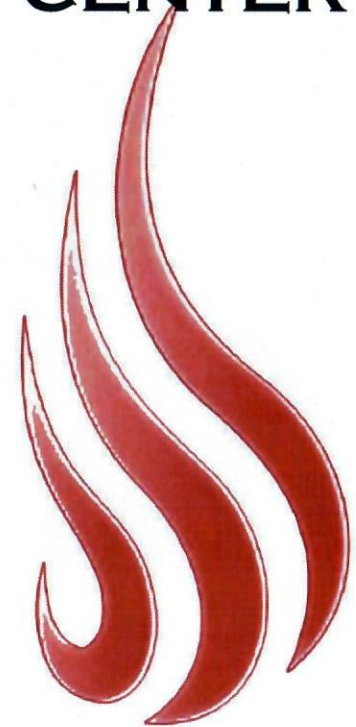


If you wish, you can contact the Fire Department and request a Fire Safety Inspection, or advice pertaining to any questions you may have about Fire Safety issues.



Norristown Fire Dept.  
235 East Airy Street  
Norristown, PA 19401  
610-270-2894

# **FIRE SAFETY AT YOUR WORSHIP CENTER**



## **NORRISTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## Reduce risk of arson

- Maintain adequate exterior lighting to eliminate hiding places.
- Use motion detection lights to alert neighbors of activity.
- Remove or trim shrubbery that blocks the view of entry ways.
- Keep all doors and windows locked when your building is unoccupied.
- Make sure valuable items are not visible from the outside.
- Keep track of keys. Change locks periodically.
- Remove or secure gasoline and other fuel sources from inside and around your building



## Electrical

- Check your electrical panel to insure proper size breakers or fuses.
- Remove extension cords that are used as permanent wiring.
- Inspect extension cords that are in use for frays or cracks.
- Make sure all junction boxes and switch/outlet boxes are properly covered.
- Check all appliances for proper connections and grounding.
- Inspect your lightning rod system to make sure rods are properly in place and wires run unbroken to the ground.

## Housekeeping

- Use care with combustible decorations. Keep paper and cloth decorations away from light bulbs, wiring and other sources of heat or flame.
- Make sure all upholstery, draperies, and furnishing fabrics are fire-retardant.



- When possible, use safe candle-type light bulbs instead of open flame candles.
- Check the organ frequently to ensure that it's turned off. If left on, the motor can overheat or short out, causing a fire.
- If smoking is permitted, designate a special area. Provide safety-type ashtrays, and check and clean them frequently.
- Clean up debris from social gatherings immediately and place in proper trash receptacles outside of the building.
- Don't store combustibles in the heating room.
- Keep kitchen hoods clean and free from accumulated grease.
- If a fire suppression kitchen hood is present, have it inspected every 6 months.
- Keep kitchen stove burners maintained in good condition.

## General fire safety

- All exit doors should open outward, with no locks or fasteners that prevent free and immediate escape to the outside.
- Keep exits and aisles free of obstructions at all times.
- Make sure all exits are clearly marked with lighted signs.
- Install and maintain emergency lighting.
- Have any remodeling, additions or repairs inspected by municipal code officials.
- If your building is undergoing repairs, remodeling or painting, make sure workers follow fire safety procedures. Blowtorches, oily rags and roofer's tar pots can be fire hazards.
- Have furnaces cleaned and inspected professionally once a year.
- Keep the furnace room door closed at all times.
- Remove bird nests from chimneys or steeples. Use mesh wire to prevent animals from accessing openings.
- Keep chimneys clean, free of soot and other obstructions.
- Keep the grounds around your building clean, free from piles of leaves and rubbish.

