

National Pet Fire Safety Day is July 15

Promote pet fire safety in your community

An estimated 500,000 pets are affected annually by home fires, and a new data analysis by the National Fire Protection Association shows that nearly 1,000 house fires each year are accidentally started by the homeowners' pets. The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is joining ADT Security Services and the American Kennel Club® (AKC) for the third annual National Pet Fire Safety Day on July 15 to spread awareness about how to prevent pets from starting home fires and keep pets safe in the event of an emergency.

"Not many pet owners realize that their pet can actually be the cause of a devastating fire," said AKC spokesperson Lisa Peterson. "Simple preventative measures, such as flameless candles and removing stove knobs when leaving the house, can mean the difference between life and death for your four-legged friends."

Chris and Kay Wardlow of Oklahoma know that all too well. Their curious dog Lucy was home alone and spied a cake on the stove top. As Lucy tried to get a taste, her paw accidentally hit the stove knob and turned on the gas burner that was under the cake pan. Within minutes, the house was filled with smoke, triggering the Wardlow's ADT monitored smoke detector. Firefighters were called to the scene and Lucy was rescued.

"Planning for unexpected emergencies like home fires and taking these precautions are an integral part of responsible dog ownership," Peterson said.

Fire departments across the country are encouraged to utilize Pet Fire Safety Day on July 15 to spread pet fire safety messages in your community. The following tips can be used to help educate pet owners on how to prevent their beloved pet from starting a fire, as well as how to keep their pets safe.

Prevent your pet from starting fires

- **Extinguish open flames** - Pets are generally curious and will investigate cooking appliances, candles, or even a fire in your fireplace. Ensure your pet is not left unattended around an open flame and make sure to thoroughly extinguish any open flame before leaving your home.
- **Remove stove knobs** - Be sure to remove stove knobs or protect them with covers before leaving the house – a stove or cook top is the number one piece of equipment involved in your pet starting a fire.
- **Invest in flameless candles** – These candles contain a light bulb rather than an open flame, and take the danger out of your pet knocking over a candle. Cats are notorious for starting fires when their tails turn over lit candles.
- **Beware of water bowls on wooden decks** – Do not leave a glass water bowl for your pet outside on a wooden deck. The sun's rays when filtered through the glass and water can actually heat up and ignite the wooden deck beneath it. Choose stainless steel or ceramic bowls instead.

- **Pet proof the home** - Take a walk around your home and look for areas where pets might start fires inadvertently, such as loose wires and other potential hazards.

Keep your pets safe

- **Keep pets near entrances when away from home** – When leaving pets home alone, keep them in areas or rooms near entrances where firefighters can easily find them.
- **Secure young pets** - Especially with young puppies, keep them confined away from potential fire-starting hazards when you are away from home, such as in crates or behind baby gates in secure areas.
- **Practice escape routes with pets** – Keep collars and leashes at the ready in case you have to evacuate quickly with your pet or firefighters need to rescue your pet.
- **Consider using monitored smoke detection services** – As an added layer of protection beyond battery-operated smoke alarms, smoke detectors connected to a monitoring center help save pets who can't escape when left home alone.
- **Affix a pet alert window cling** – Write down the number of pets inside your house and attach the static cling to a front window. This critical information saves rescuers time when locating your pets. Make sure to keep the number of pets listed on them updated.

The NVFC has a listing of fire departments across the nation where pet owners can obtain a free pet alert window cling as part of National Pet Fire Safety Day. Visit www.nvfc.org/windowclings to find a location near you. The clings are also free online at www.adt.com/pets and will be available this September at your local AKC Responsible Dog Ownership Day. This year's flagship event will be held in Raleigh on September 24. Visit <http://www.akc.org/clubs/rdod/> for more information on an event near you.

The **National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC)** represents the interests of the volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue services. The NVFC serves as the voice of the volunteer in the national arena and provides invaluable tools, resources, programs, and advocacy for first responders across the nation. Learn more at www.nvfc.org.

The United States Fire Administration recommends everyone should have a comprehensive fire protection plan that includes smoke alarms, residential sprinklers, and practicing a home fire escape plan.

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