

OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL

GARAGE FIRE SAFETY

Residential garages were designed primarily for the storage of vehicles safely out of the weather. Over time garages develop into expanded storage areas for many household items.

With the addition of lawnmowers, fuel containers, paint cans, propane tanks, and assorted flammable materials, your garage can contain the highest concentration of combustible materials in your home. These materials equate into what fire investigators refer to as a "Fuel-Load". The higher the fuel-load the hotter and faster moving the fire will be!

There are over 6500 garage fires reported annually that have resulted in 30 deaths, 400 injuries and over \$500 million dollars in losses.

With the right combination of fuel, oxygen and an ignition source a fire can double in size every 30 seconds. The heavy fuel load associated with a garage fire means that if the garage is attached to your home it will quickly extend into your living space. If you don't have a smoke or heat alarm a garage fire can burn completely unawares until the superheated toxic smoke and gasses start to enter your home. If that happens you have literally just minutes to escape the house with your family!

- Keep all your containerized fuel/gas, propane tanks and paint cans in an outdoor shed away from your home.
- Insure that the area immediately surrounding your car is clear of all combustible materials.
- Don't overload your electrical outlets with extension cords.
- Keep combustible materials clear from electrical outlets and ignition sources.
- Dispose of oily rags in a sealed metal container.
- Various types of paint stains and deck finishes are linseed oil based and can auto-ignite via spontaneous combustion if oily rags and paper are not properly disposed of.
- Make sure you have a one-hour fire rated door if the garage leads directly into the home.
- A minimum 5/8 inch gypsum wall needs to separate the garage from your living space.
- Install a smoke and/or heat alarm at the highest section of the interior garage roof.
- Purchase a rated "A/B/C" fire extinguisher and mount it 4 feet from the floor near an exit.
- Check for rodent infestation as they can significantly contribute to a fire by chewing through electrical wiring.
- There is a direct correlation between cleanliness, organization and fire safety. Make sure there are clear aisle ways and means of egress to exit your garage.

As with the rest of your home, you need to inspect the garage for any issues that might contribute to or lead to a fire on a regular basis.