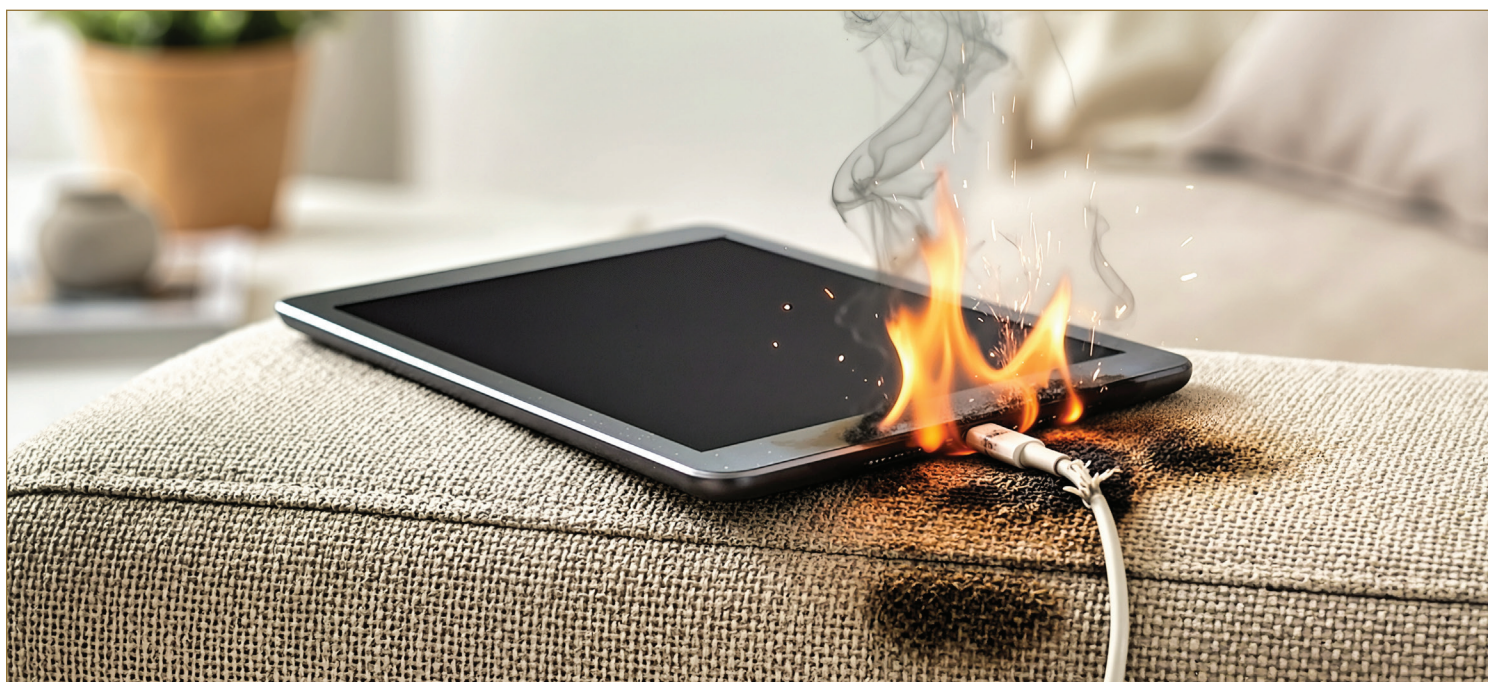




CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Faulty tech devices can start fire in home



By Jane Sutter

As parents navigate the best ways to teach children and teens to use technology, there is one lesson that is easy to overlook: How to charge cell phones, iPads, e-bikes, scooters and other devices safely.

Failure to do so can result in a devastating fire that injures or worse, kills people. That is why the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) chose the theme of "Safe Charging is a Superpower: Charge into Fire Safety"™ as its theme for fire prevention this fall. NFPA is a 104-year-old self-funded non-profit dedicated to the elimination of global loss from fire, electrical and related hazards.

"This year's theme is around safe charging and how charging your lithium-ion battery items is so important, because little kids all the way to older adults have these devices in their home," said Kelly Ransdell, NFPA director of public education.

Ransdell mentioned a tragedy that happened in Brooklyn, New York, in August. Ac-

cording to media reports, 18-year-old Caleb Matthews died in a fire in his 12th-floor apartment in Brooklyn. Investigators reported that they believed the fire happened when an ebike battery that was being charged exploded in the apartment.

"We used to ride the e-bikes all the time, over the Brooklyn Bridge, over the Manhattan Bridge, go hang out in the city, ride up the West Side Highway; that was an adventure the three of us liked to do," Joseph Matthews, Caleb's father, told ABC News/Channel 7. "One advice I would give to families that have e-bikes: Don't keep it next to your entrance or exit to your home, especially if you don't have a fire escape, because anything can happen at any time ... Policies need to be changed to stop having e-bikes being charged in an apartment building or in a home," Welch said. "Caleb researched those batteries before he bought them." In media reports about the incident, firefighters cautioned that these battery fires

cannot be put out by residents, and people should call 911 immediately.

Sadly, this was not the first death caused by the explosion of a lithium battery in New York State or in the U.S. According to the Research Institute of Underwriters Laboratories, between 1995 and 2024, there were 340 fatalities in the U.S. related to incidents with micro-mobility devices (defined as those that can move at less than 20 mph). "Lithium-ion batteries can go into thermal runaway undetected and result in a fire. Not just any fire, a fire that emits flames, smoke and toxic gases that can cause an explosion and spread throughout a house, apartment or storefront," according to a statement from the Research Institute.

Be careful about purchases

When purchasing items that are rechargeable, it's important to check to make sure that they are listed by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL), which means

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they meet minimum safety standards and are marked accordingly, Ransdell said. Three examples of marks to look for are UL, ETL and CSA.

It's important that people do their homework when purchasing chargers, cables and cords to make sure they are compatible with the devices and are either made by the device's manufacturer or approved by them, Ransdell said. A person might be tempted to buy the cheapest charger they find online without checking the safety standards. Such a charger can damage the device. "So cheaper is not always better," Ransdell said she recently purchased a rechargeable speaker that did not come with a charging block. "I had to actually get out the instructions and see what kind I needed to buy" so she could safely charge her device by plugging it into a wall.

When devices are being charged, they naturally heat up and could overheat, Ransdell noted, so it's important that devices be charged on a hard surface, not on a bed, carpet or couch, for example. Charging on a hard service gives the device a chance to breathe and properly ventilate itself. Teenagers especially seem to fall asleep charging their phone on their bed, Ransdell said.

Once a device is fully charged, "you want to take them off that because that keeps it from getting overcharged," Ransdell said. Large items such as e-bikes, scooters and power tools should be charged outdoors and not near an exit. "There's no safe way to charge (those) indoors" in case a battery explodes. Items also should not be charged in extreme heat or extreme cold.

Ransdell said that she has become more mindful of her own use of rechargeable items. She said at night she turns off her fully charged laptop and disconnects it from the charger.

Home fires

Although there are fewer home fires than 30 years ago, a person is more likely to die if his house catches on fire, according to NFPA's research foundation, Ransdell said. "Homes today are built very different than they were 30 years ago. Homes today have a lot more electronics. They have a lot more synthetic materials and even the building materials that homes are built with burn faster and hotter. All that ties into why it's so important to have working smoke alarms. ... You really have to make sure



Children and fire facts:

Children are at great risk for injury in a home fire and are one of the groups with the highest number of fire-related deaths.

- More than 400 children younger than 10 years die in home fires every year.
- Young children, especially those younger than five years, cannot be relied on to escape from a fire on their own.
- Many children have a hard time waking up to the sound of a tonal smoke alarm. At night, they may sleep right through the alarm. More than half of children younger than five years who die in house fires are asleep at the time.
- When a fire starts, children often become scared and confused. They tend to hide somewhere they feel safe, such as in a closet or under the bed.
- Even older children do not always make smart choices during a fire emergency. They can panic or become afraid. They may try to return to the burning house after they have escaped for something they left behind.

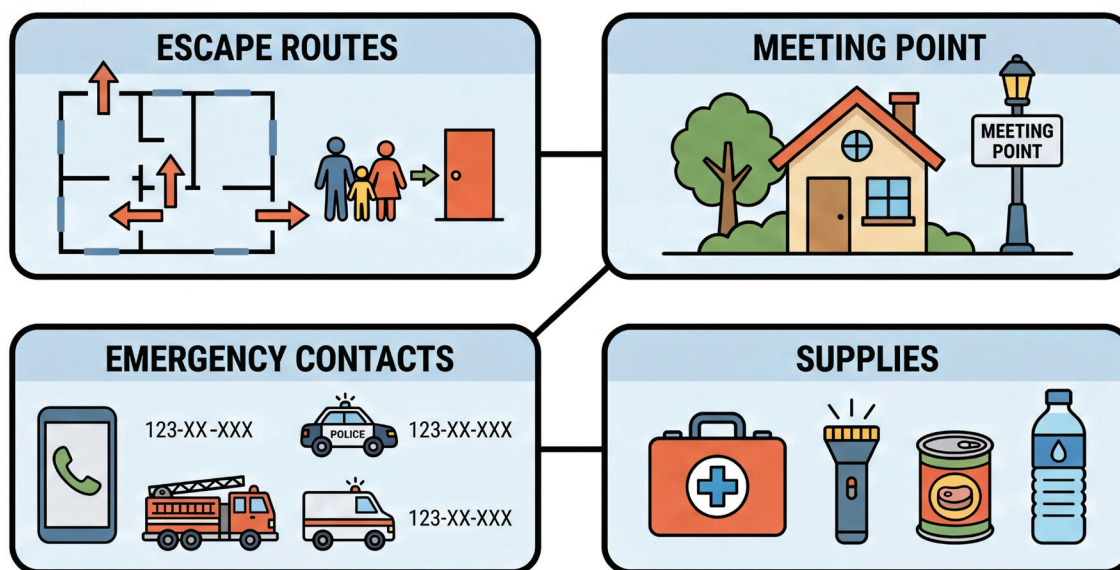
Source: Nationwide Children's Hospital website: Fire Safety for Children

The National Fire Protection Association has a multitude of information and tips on fire safety on its website at NFPA | The National Fire Protection Association.

For its fall campaign "Safe Charging is a Superpower: Charge into Fire Safety™," the NFPA website offers tipsheets, a quiz for families and coloring sheets. Included are tips such as:

- Use the cord and charger that came with the device or one approved by the manufacturer. Using the wrong charger can damage the battery and increase the chance of fire.
- Charge on a hard, flat surface like a table, desk or bare floor because devices and chargers create heat during normal charging. Soft surfaces such as beds, pillows and couches can trap heat and block airflow, which can cause a battery to overheat.
- Stop using your device if it feels very hot, starts to swell, smells strange, leaks, smokes, or makes popping or hissing sounds.
- Unplug your device once it is fully charged.
- Charge large items like e-bikes, scooters and power tools outside when possible. Do not block exits when charging. These batteries are larger and store more energy. Fires can grow quickly if the battery fails.

HOME EMERGENCY PLAN



Escape planning from your home:

The NFPA has helpful PDFs of safety tips, a grid where you can draw your own home floor plan, and the following instructions on how to make your own home fire escape plan:

- Draw a map of your home. Show all doors and windows.
- Visit each room. Find two ways out.
- Check that all windows and doors open easily. You should be able to use them to get outside.
- Make sure your home has smoke alarms. Push the test button to make sure each alarm is working.

- Pick a meeting place outside. It should be in front of your home. Everyone will meet at the meeting place.
- Make sure your house or building number can be seen from the street.
- Talk about your plan with everyone in your home.
- Make sure everyone in your home knows how to call 911 or your local emergency number.
- Practice your home fire drill!

Make your own home fire escape plan using the grid provided on the NYFPA website.

Scald prevention:

A scald injury can happen at any age. Children, older adults and people with disabilities are especially at risk. Hot liquids from bath water, hot coffee and even microwaved soup can cause devastating injuries. Scald burns are the second leading cause of all burn injuries. Here just a few of many tips on a printable PDF on the NFPA website:

- Teach children that hot things can burn. Install anti-scald devices on tub faucets and shower heads.
- Before placing a child in the bath or getting in the bath yourself, test the water by moving your hand, wrist and forearm through

the water. The water should feel warm, not hot, to the touch.

- Place hot liquids and food in the center of a table or toward the back of a counter.
- Have a "kid-free zone" of at least three feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.
- Never hold a child while you are cooking, drinking a hot liquid, or carrying hot foods or liquids.

What to do for a burn: Treat a burn right away. Cool the burn with cool water for three to five minutes. Cover with a clean, dry cloth. Get medical help if needed.

To view the NFPA's dozens of tip sheets and classroom lesson plans, go to Home Fire Safety.

that you get early notification that there's a problem because you can have as little as two minutes to get out."

Homes should have smoke alarms inside and outside every bedroom, Ransdell emphasized. Families should have a home escape plan and practice it twice a year, during the day and then practice it at night. Families that have elders with mobility issues should consider where they sleep and if they can get out quickly enough in an emergency. A room on the first floor may need to be converted to a bedroom. If a person with back issues sleeps in a recliner in a den, that room needs a smoke alarm. "It's really important to have a smoke alarm where anyone sleeps," Ransdell said.

Jane Sutter is a Rochester-based freelance writer.



5 FIVE WAYS

to protect your children from sexual abuse

Parents play the primary role in educating their children about sexual abuse. Here are 5 tips for teaching safety to the little ones God has entrusted to you.

1

Keep it practical. Teach your children the differences between safe touches and unsafe touches.

2

Tell your children that saying “no” is okay. Empower your children to say “no” if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable or touches them inappropriately.

3

Give your children a way to alert you. Tell your children they can use an excuse or share a special “code-word” with you to alert you about an unsafe person or situation.

4

Tell your children to report an unsafe touch.

Let your children know they should tell you if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe around any adult or peer. You can also identify other adults they can tell about unsafe touches.

5

Tell your children you trust them. If your child makes a report to you, believe him or her. Tell them it is not their fault and that you love them. Immediately bring the allegation to the attention of public authorities.



Promise to Protect

Pledge to Heal



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

Creating a Safe Environment Newsletter

is published quarterly by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester with the aim of helping all of us keep children and vulnerable adults safe at home, at church and in all places in our community.

Comments can be directed to:
Tammy Sylvester

Diocesan Coordinator of Safe Environment Education and Compliance
585-328-3228

Tammy.Sylvester@dor.org.

Victims of sexual abuse by any employee of the Church should always report to the civil authorities.

To report a case of possible sexual abuse and to receive help and guidance from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, contact the diocesan Victims' Assistance Coordinator:

Deborah Housel
(585) 328-3228, ext. 1555;
toll-free 1-800-388-7177,
ext. 1555
victimsassistance@dor.org.

All photos in this newsletter are for illustrative purposes only.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY RESOURCES

ONLINE SAFETY RESOURCES

CHILDREN & TEENS' SAFETY SITES:

Webonauts Internet Academy:

<http://pbskids.org/webonauts/>
PBS Kids game that helps younger children understand the basics of Internet behavior and safety.

NSTeens:

<http://www.nsteens.org/>
A program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that has interactive games and videos on a variety of Internet safety topics.

FOR PARENTS:

Common Sense Media

<https://www.common sense media.org/parent-concerns>
A comprehensive and frequently updated site that is packed with resources. Dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing information and education

Family Online Safety Institute:

<http://www.fosi.org/>

iKeepSafe:

<http://www.ikeepsafe.org/>
Resources for parents, educators, kids and parishes on navigating mobile and social media technologies

Faith and Safety:

<http://www.faithandsafety.org>
Safety in a digital world, a joint project of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Greek Orthodox Church in America

LOCAL RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Bivona Child Advocacy Center
(Monroe, Wayne counties):
www.BivonaCAC.org
585-935-7800

Chemung County Child Advocacy Center:
607-737-8449
www.chemungcounty.com

Child Advocacy Center of Cayuga County:
315-253-9795
www.cacofcayugacounty.org

Finger Lakes Child Advocacy Program
(Ontario County):
www.cacfingerlakes.org
315-548-3232

Darkness to Light organization:
www.d2l.org

STEUBEN COUNTY: Southern Tier Children's Advocacy Center:
www.sthcs.org
716-372-8532

NYS State Central Registry
(Child Abuse Reporting Hotline):
1-800-342-3720

NYS Child Advocacy Resource and Consultation Center (CARCC)
866-313-3013

Tompkins County Advocacy Center:
www.theadvocacycenter.org
607-277-3203

Wyoming County Sexual Abuse Response Team:
585-786-8846

Yates County Child Abuse Review Team:
315-531-3417, Ext. 6