
CTSI Requests that Candles be Removed from County Buildings

After a major fire loss in Prowers County in 2004, ACTSI's Loss Prevention department requested that all candles be removed from all county buildings with no exceptions. Open flames (i.e., candles) pose an unacceptable risk of fire damage to property, and nationally an increased number of fires have been attributed to burning candles. Most county-owned buildings in Colorado are not protected by sprinkler systems and counties should act accordingly.

Candle Caused Prowers County Fire

In 2004, the Prowers County Annex building was damaged extensively by a fire started by a candle. The building was rendered unusable until repairs could be made. Employees who worked in the building—including employees of the Social Services department, the Health Department, and Colorado State University Cooperative Extension—had to be temporarily relocated. Thankfully, no one was injured or killed.

The candle was located on an employee's desk in one of the building's offices. It was reported that the burning candle was perceived to be extinguished when the employee left the office. Approximately an hour later, the candle flame ignited some papers on a tack board behind the candle. Because the office door was closed, the fire used up the oxygen in the office and put itself out.

A short time later, smoke was reported in the hallway. When employees opened the door to investigate, oxygen filled the room and the fire flared up again. The employees who opened the door were forced to flee the area. The smoke then filled the building and someone called the fire department to report the fire.

Several offices were heavily damaged by the fire, and the rest of the building and its contents were damaged by the smoke. It took the county several months to make the necessary repairs and get the displaced employees back to work in the Annex building. The cost reached more than \$2.9 million, making it the most expensive property claim in CAPP's 31 year history.

Increase in Fires Caused by Candles

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reported that between 2009 to 2013, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 9,300 fires started by candles. The NFPA also reports that 3% of all residential fires are caused by burning candles. An increasing number of people are using candles to scent their homes and offices, increasing the number of candle-related fires. If you want to scent your office, CTSI recommends using a non-electric potpourri or air freshener. Even electrical air fresheners pose a fire risk. In fact, one electrical air freshener, the Glade® Extra Outlet Scented Oil Air Freshener, was recalled because it has caused so many fires.

What This Means for Counties

CTSI requests the use of candles, electric air fresheners, or any open flame be prohibited in the workplace as they pose a high risk of property damage, injury, and even loss of life. For more information about fire safety, contact CTSI at 303 861 0507. [ctsi](http://www.ctsi.org)