

Safety **TIPS** from Portland Fire & Rescue's **Prevention Division**

An information resource for citizens

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Home Oxygen Safety

The use of home-based and portable oxygen systems in the home continues to increase. Sources suggest it's mostly due to a growing older adult population, shorter hospital stays, and more advanced home healthcare services.

Portland Fire & Rescue (PF&R) wants you know that it is important to understand how oxygen can contribute to home fires. Under normal circumstances, room air contains approximately 21% oxygen. Oxygen can seep into clothing, fabric, hair, and beards. Contrary to popular belief, oxygen is not flammable but can cause other flammable materials to ignite more easily and to burn more quickly.

Oxygen is of great benefit to those home healthcare patients in need of supplemental oxygen therapy. Please remember, however, that oxygen should always be handled with caution and complete awareness of potential hazards. Oxygen can be used safely at home. Below are suggested guidelines to follow:

- Never smoke while using oxygen.
- Warn visitors not to smoke near you when you are using oxygen. Encourage visitors to smoke outside.
- Post at least one NO SMOKING sign in a prominent place at the entrance to your home.
- When you go to a restaurant with your portable oxygen source, sit in a section away from any open flame such as candles or warming burners.
- Stay at least eight feet from gas stoves, candles, lighted fireplaces and other heat sources.
- Keep oxygen cylinders and vessels in a well-ventilated area (not in closets, behind curtains, or other confined space). The small amount of oxygen gas that is continually vented from these units can accumulate in a confined space and become a fire hazard.
- Keep oxygen cylinders and vessels a minimum of 8 feet from heaters, heat producing and electrical appliances.
- Secure oxygen cylinders and vessels to a fixed object or place in a stand.
- Oxygen cylinders and vessels must remain upright at all times. Never tip an oxygen cylinder or vessel on its side or try to roll it to a new location.
- Always operate oxygen cylinder or container valves slowly. Abrupt starting and stopping of oxygen flow may ignite any contaminant that might be in the system.
- Turn the cylinder valve off when not using your oxygen.
- Only use a properly grounded wall outlet for your oxygen concentrator.

- Do not use extension cords for your oxygen concentrator.
- Do not place the electrical cord or oxygen tubing under rugs or furniture.
- Do not use any flammable products like cleaning fluids, paint thinner, or aerosol sprays while using your oxygen.
- Keep all grease, oil and petroleum products (even small amounts) and flammable materials away from your oxygen equipment. Some organic materials can react violently with oxygen if ignited by a hot spark.
- Use water-based lubricants on your lips and hands.
- Don't use an oil-based product like petroleum jelly, petroleum based creams or lotions.
- Do not use bedding or clothes made of wool, nylon or synthetic fabrics as these materials have the tendency to produce static electricity. The use of cotton material bedding and clothes will avoid sparks from static electricity.
- Do not allow children or untrained individuals to handle or operate oxygen equipment.
- Always have your gas supplier's number handy.
- Ensure that you have an all purpose fire extinguisher close by and familiarize yourself with its use.

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY TODAY!