

# Fire and Life Safety for Licensed Home-Based Child Care Settings in British Columbia



# Fire and Life Safety for Licensed Home-Based Child Care Settings in British Columbia

---

Providing a safe environment for children in your home based child care setting is essential. The following information in this booklet will help you get started.

A licensing officer at your local health authority Community Care Facility Licensing program is also available to help make sure your home-based child care setting is a safe environment. They will also help arrange for a professional fire safety assessment of your home, if necessary.

Not all fire departments are able to conduct fire inspections for home-based child care settings. However, most fire departments are available to consult with you on fire safety and evacuation plans and fire drills.

## Contents

---

General Fire and Life Safety .....	2
Safety Equipment .....	4
Emergency Preparedness .....	7
Fire and Emergency Escape Plans.....	8
Education Ideas.....	11
Resources .....	13
How to use a portable fire extinguisher .....	14
Checklist: Fire and Life Safety .....	14

# General Fire and Life Safety

---

As a child care provider, you must ensure that the indoor and outdoor environments are safe for the children you care for.

## Some basic safety rules:

1. Open flames, fires and fire pits should not be used. This includes small contained fires in chimneys and items like portable propane fire pits.
2. Never use a portable generator, BBQ, camp stove or other similar device indoors, including inside a garage or other enclosed or partially enclosed areas.
  - Keep matches, lighters, cigarettes or ashtrays out of children's reach. Do not smoke when you are caring for children.
  - If you choose to use birthday candles or sparklers for special occasions, remember they are potential fire hazards:
    - Extinguish candles with a candle snuffer.
    - Use sparklers outside and put out the sparkler in a bucket of water. Supervise children and keep young child at a safe distance to prevent injury.
3. Paper can catch fire easily and can make a fire burn faster.
  - Paper products should not cover too much wall space. Limit decorative paper and children's art work to no more than 20% of the wall space.
  - Do not put decorative paper or art work on exit/escape doors.
  - Place paper products away from sources of heat, such as electric baseboard heaters.
4. Flammable liquids such as paint thinner, gel fuels, gasoline and propane can catch fire or explode.
  - Flammable liquids must be inaccessible to children and stored in a locked area in a garage or shed - not inside your home.
  - Do not store more than 30 litres of flammable and combustible liquids (liquids which can easily catch fire and burn/explode). Store these products away from the home in locked storage units/sheds.
  - Follow all manufacturers' instructions for use and storage of flammable liquids.
5. Containers used for waste should be made of material that will not burn, such as metal.
  - Waste containers that are made of wicker or plastic or covered with decorative cloth are fire hazards.


6. Post 911 information in a visible location and include the address of the home.
  - If there is no 911, post the fire department, ambulance and police phone numbers for your area in a visible location – include the address of the home.
7. Children sometimes try to put items into electrical outlets. Ensure that safety plugs or protective covers are in place on all outlets.
  - Do not plug too many items into one outlet.
  - Be sure all outlets and extensions cords are in good working condition (no exposed wires or broken covers).
8. Ensure all poisonous and hazardous materials are stored safely and out of children's reach.
  - Poisonous items such as household cleaners, laundry and dishwashing soap, prescription and non-prescription medications, vitamins, cosmetics and insect repellent should be stored in their original containers and out of children's reach.
9. Prevent burns.
  - Install a permanently mounted and secured metal screen to prevent burns from heating appliances such as wood, electrical or gas fired stoves and fireplaces.
  - Keep a close eye on children when using the stove and turn pot handles inwards so children cannot reach them.
  - Stand-alone space heaters can cause injury and are a potential source of fire if not used properly.
    - Children must be directly supervised at all times when using portable space heaters.
    - It is not recommended to use portable space heaters if small children are in the area.
    - Follow manufacture's recommendations and never leave portable space heaters unattended.
10. Be prepared.
  - Take first aid training and keep your training up to date.
  - Have a first aid kit in both your home and car.
  - Secure tall furniture and shelves to walls to prevent tipping accidents.
  - Create an emergency preparedness kit and know locate the nearest emergency facility.
  - Develop an emergency exit/escape plan and practise it.
  - Post the emergency escape plan and instructions near exits.
  - Children should wear shoes at all times to protect them from broken glass or hot embers during an emergency.
  - Clean chimneys at least once a year to prevent a chimney fire.

# Safety Equipment

---

## Smoke Alarm

Smoke alarms that are properly installed and maintained play a vital role in reducing fire deaths and injuries. If there is a fire in your home, smoke alarms alert you to give you time to get out.

Choose smoke alarms with the Underwriters Laboratories of Canada label  (UL or ULC). Smoke alarms should be interconnected, where possible. When one sounds, they all sound.

- Install smoke alarms outside each separate sleeping area and in every sleeping room. Install alarms on every level of the home. Large homes may need extra smoke alarms.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for placement and mounting height.

### **DO NOT DISCONNECT SMOKE ALARMS OR REMOVE BATTERIES.**

Humidity from a bathroom or steam or grease from a kitchen can cause nuisance alarms. If a smoke alarm goes off for no reason at all:

- First, move it to another location.
- If the problem persists, buy a new smoke alarm.
- Dual technology and photoelectric smoke alarms are also available to help reduce nuisance alarms.

## Carbon Monoxide Alarm

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas created when fuel is burned. It is produced by vehicles, small engines, stoves, fireplaces, BBQs and furnaces.

CO is poisonous. Because you can't smell it, you can be poisoned in as little as one to three minutes. CO alarms that are properly installed and maintained play a vital role in reducing deaths and serious health problems. You need a carbon monoxide alarm to tell you to get outside.

Carbon monoxide alarms save lives. Choose an alarm certified to Canadian Standards Association (CSA) requirements, displaying the CSA (blue flame) logo.

- Look for a battery operated unit or plug-in model with a battery backup in case the power fails. The battery backup may only last for a few hours – consider having extra batteries on hand.

- Look for a model that clearly lists the replacement date.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm in the hallway outside bedrooms (on each level if you have more than one floor).
- Don't install a carbon monoxide alarm in or near an attached garage/carport or near the door leading into the garage/carport.
- Don't install a carbon monoxide alarm in your furnace room, kitchen or close to fuel-burning appliances.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for placement and mounting height.

### **DO NOT DISCONNECT CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS**

## **Fire and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Testing**

Test smoke and CO alarms monthly using the manufacturer's recommendation, usually by pressing the test button.

*If the alarm does not sound:*

- Check the battery. If the battery is dead, replace it immediately.
- Check that there is electricity (check the breaker/fuse box and if the problem cannot be fixed, contact a qualified electrician at once).
- The alarm may be dead and needs to be replaced immediately.
- Also do a yearly sensor test for your smoke alarm (using real or artificial smoke). This is important to do as the sound may work, but the sensor may not be working.

Test the alarms with the children and turn it into a fire drill and emergency evacuation practice.

*Every home should have a fire and evacuation escape plan. Tell the children what is going to happen and why you are practicing. Explain to the children that the sound will be very loud and tell them why the smoke or CO alarm goes off. Show them what to do when they hear the sound of the alarm. You should test alarms and practice evacuating from the home monthly. Children need to be reminded of the alarms sounds and what they need to do to be safe.*

*Infants may be startled by the sound of the alarm. Take this into consideration when testing. Put infants in another room (as long as they can still be supervised) away from the sound of the alarm or consider practicing on a day they are not present. Parents should also be notified about the fire drill and emergency evacuation their children will participate in.*

Mark your calendar to remind yourself to practice again next month.

## Care of smoke and CO alarms

Dust and dirt can build up and can lead to nuisance alarms or cause the alarm to malfunction.


- Clean the alarms in your home every six months.
- Carefully clean away any dust and dirt from the outside of the unit.
- Never remove batteries or unplug alarms for other uses.

## Replace smoke and CO alarms

Check how old your smoke and CO alarms are; look at the manufacture date on the back. Depending on the date of manufacture, replacement could be more or less than ten years. Follow the manufacture's guidelines for replacement.

## Fire Extinguisher

A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives; but portable extinguishers have limitations. Because fire can grow and spread very fast, the number one priority is to get out safely.

Fire extinguishers should have the minimum rating of **2A:10B:C**. The effectiveness of an extinguisher is not determined by its size but by its rating. Look for the Underwriters Laboratories of Canada label  (UL or ULC).

Fire extinguishers with the rating 2A:10B: C is for general use, and can be used to fight small fires. They will not be effective against a large or established fire.



**Type A Fires: ordinary combustibles such as trash, wood and paper (A)**

**Type B Fires: flammable liquids such as grease (B)**

**Type C Fires: small electrical appliances (C)**

**REMEMBER: Get the children and yourself out and stay out!  
Call 911 or the local fire department.**

## Installing and caring for portable fire extinguishers

Securely mount fire extinguishers on a wall close to the exit. Extinguishers can be mounted between 1-1.5m (3-5 ft.) off the floor. Place them so it is easy for adults to see and reach but out of the reach of children.

It is also a good idea to have an extinguisher in more than one room of the home and on more than one floor of the home (e.g., kitchen and laundry room).

- Keep a portable fire extinguisher in your car if you transport children.
- Check all fire extinguishers at least once a month. Check the pressure gauge; if the pressure is below the acceptable level indicated, recharge or replace it immediately.
- Read the instructions that come with the fire extinguisher before you need to use it. A simple information sheet is included on page 13 for you to post on your wall.
- Fire extinguishers must be professionally inspected and tagged once a year.
- Recharge or replace the extinguisher immediately after use.

**DO NOT RE-ENTER A BURNING BUILDING.**

## Emergency Preparedness

---

It is important to prepare for emergencies because one could happen while children are in your care. Emergencies happen anytime, anywhere and without warning, but there are things you can do to make emergency situations a little easier to deal with. For more detailed information, visit [www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC](http://www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC).

### PLAN

- Know the risks to your area of the province (e.g., floods, fires, earthquakes).
- What will you do if an emergency happens while children are in your care? How might your response vary depending upon the type of emergency?
- Where will you take the children to minimize the risk of injury?
- In case an emergency requires relocation, do you have secondary sites and emergency transportation lined up? Do you have portable records/supplies?
- What will you say to the children to reduce their fears and increase their safety?
- How will you communicate with parents and local authorities? What will you do if phone lines or cell phone towers are down/circuits are busy?

### PREPARE

- Identify safe places to take children. Consider locations out in the open, such as a nearby park, that are away from building structures and power lines. When identifying an alternative building as a safe zone, be sure to include personnel from that location in your emergency planning to ensure all parties are aware of the plan.
- Identify safe routes to and from your alternate, safe sites.
- Create an emergency preparedness kit.
- Prepare children for emergencies through informative activities that will not frighten them.
- Practice your emergency plan and escape routes.
- Provide parents with your emergency plan.

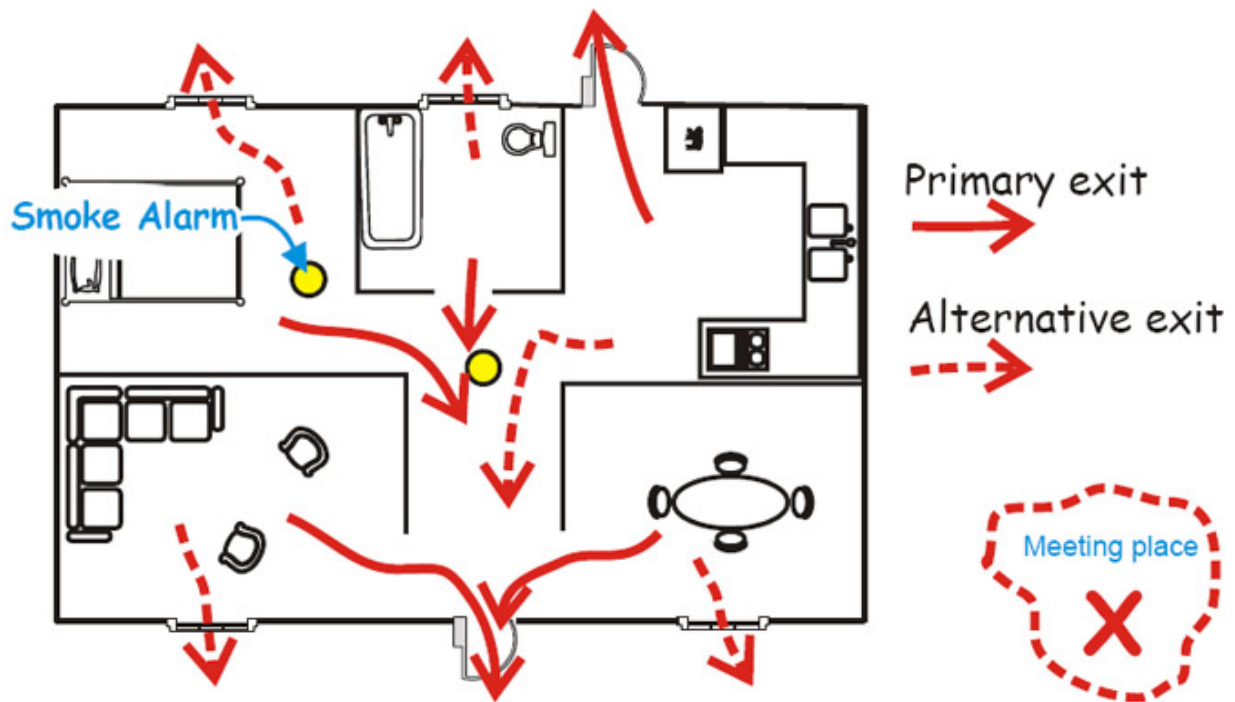


# Fire and Emergency Escape Plans

Create and practise a fire drill and emergency evacuation plan. (*Child Care Licensing Regulation, Section 22*)

- Create a fire and emergency escape plan specific to your home.
- Have two easy-to-access ways of escape on each floor of the home used by children. This may include a window and door. Windows should be easy for children to escape from and any locking devices on the window or door should be easy to open from the inside.
- Be sure that the escape exits are clear of furniture, toys or other items inside as well as clear from snow, trees, water or other items outside of the exit.
- Plan a safe meeting spot outside the home where the children can go to in case of fire or evacuation.
- Practise your fire and escape plan monthly with the children in your care. Practicing should include the actual sounds of the smoke or CO alarm (so they won't be scared when they hear it), as well as having the children practice escaping out all of the different exits and meeting at the safe place outside.

Consult with your local fire department when developing your fire and evacuation plan for helpful hints and resources.



## Earthquake drills

Children in your care should know what to do in an earthquake. Practise the following steps monthly. For more detailed information, visit [www.ShakeOutBC.ca](http://www.ShakeOutBC.ca).

During an earthquake:

- Take cover under a heavy table or solid furniture.
- Face away from windows, which can break and shower glass inside.
- Assume crash position on knees, head down and hands clasped on back of neck. If you can, cover your head with a book or jacket.
- Count aloud to 60. Earthquakes rarely last longer than 60 seconds and counting may help to calm children.
- If you are indoors, stay there. Stay away from glass. Take cover.
- If you are outside, stay away from buildings and power lines.
- If you are in a moving car, stop in a clear, safe place and stay inside the car.

After an earthquake:

- Check for injuries and give first aid if children are hurt.
- Check water, gas, and electrical lines. If damaged, shut off. If a gas leak is detected, open windows and take children out of the house. Report gas leaks to emergency workers.
- Do not use candles, matches or other open flames. Broken gas lines may catch fire or explode.
- Turn on the radio and listen to emergency instructions. Use your car radio if no other radio is available.
- Do not make telephone calls unless they are life-saving. The phone system will be overloaded in an emergency.

## Emergency Supplies

It's your responsibility to gather supplies and plan what you will in an emergency. The following is a list of basic supply ideas. Be sure to include things you need specific to your home-based child care and the children in your care.

### Food and water

- A three-day supply of non-perishable food. Foods that do not need refrigeration are compact and lightweight, such as canned food, energy bars and dried foods.
- Four litres of water per person per day (i.e., a three-day supply). Purchase bottled water and keep it in its original container in a nearby, cool and dark place. Include small bottles that can be carried easily. Don't open it until you need it.
- Check the expiration or "best before" dates of food and water. Set a reminder in your phone or remember to check the dates when the clocks spring forward and fall back.

## **Supplies**

- A first aid kit for your home and car.
- Battery operated or hand crank generator radio and flashlight.
- Candles and matches or lighter.
- A whistle (in case you need to attract attention).
- Blankets, extra clothing and footwear.
- Hand sanitizer and bleach.
- Toilet paper and other personal care supplies.
- Cellphone with charger.
- Cash in small bills.
- Garbage bags.
- Utensils, plates and cups (remember the can opener).
- Basic tools (work gloves, dust mask, pocket knife, duct tape).

## **Other items**

- Think about including small games, books, stuffed animals, paper and crayons.
- Include things that children may find comfort in while possibly being separated from family members (e.g., note from mom & dad, family photo).
- A copy of your emergency plan and contact information.
- Emergency phone numbers. Consider obtaining out of Province contact numbers for family or friends of children in your care. If local phone services are unavailable due to an emergency, you may be able to use long-distance lines to re-connect.
- Infant/toddler food and diapers, and food and water for pets.
- Prescription medication and identification.

## **Storage suggestions**

- Make sure items are organized and easy to find.
- Keep items in a backpack, duffle bag or suitcase with wheels in an easy-to-reach place.
- Consider separating supplies into individual backpacks. That way, your kit will be more portable and each person has a grab-and-go emergency kit.
- Keep a smaller version of your emergency supplies kit in your car.

# Education Ideas

---

## Safety Lessons for Children

Hot things can hurt. Teach children that hot things can burn. Help them to identify things that are hot and things that are not.

Suggested activities:

- Talk about hot and cold sensations like summer and winter weather.
- Show children pictures of things that are hot and things that are not. The hot pictures might include an iron, stove, campfire and birthday cake with candles. The cold pictures might include an apple, a doll, a bike and crayons. Ask the children to identify which items are hot and which are not.

Cool a Burn. Explain to children that if they get burned from something hot they should always tell an adult and that burns should be cooled immediately.

Suggested activities:

- When washing hands, teach children to turn on the cold water tap before the hot water tap to reduce the risk of burns. Use pictures to help them identify the hot and cold water taps.
- Show children how to cool a burn, using your arm or hand. Have children pretend that they have a small burn, and practice running cold water or placing ice cubes over the burn.

Tell a grown-up when you find matches or lighters. Describe the difference between tools and toys. Explain that matches and lighters are tools for adults to make fire and not toys to play with. Explain that fire is hot, and it can burn and hurt you.

Suggested activities:

- Show different kinds of tools and toys such as a hammer, ball, scissors, doll, matches and a teddy bear. Ask children which are tools and which are toys.
- Teach children to tell a grown-up if they find matches or lighters.
- Read children fire safety books, and talk about the danger of matches, lighters and cigarettes.

Stop, drop, and roll! Talk about fire safety and the dangers of being too close to a fire. Explain and demonstrate “stop, drop, and roll” if your clothes catch on fire. Explain that rolling smothers the flames. Teach children to cover their face with their hands to protect their face from burns.

Suggested activities:

- Brainstorm with children how their clothes could catch on fire.
- Demonstrate “stop, drop, and roll”.
- Give each child a red felt flame and ask the children to put the flame on their clothing and then practice “stop, drop, and roll” to put the flame out.

Know the sound of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Talk about what smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are and what they do. Explain that the alarms smell the air and will make a loud sound to warn people if there is a fire or dangerous air.

Suggested activities:

- Show children where the alarms are located. Talk about alarms in children's homes. Where are they located and what do they sound like? Identify and explain the different parts of the alarms – the cover, battery, beeper, etc.
- Explain the purpose of the test button and help prepare children for the loud sound. Sound the alarm by pushing the test button so the children can hear its sound.

Practise an escape plan. Explain to children the importance of practicing escape plans so they will know what to do. Remind children that when the alarm sounds, their job is to get outside and stay out, and to never hide. Clearly mark all the emergency escape routes.

Suggest activities:

- Photocopy your escape plan and post the plan and instructions near all the escape exits. Teach the children where the outside meeting spot is; practise escaping and meeting there. If you are unsure where to set the meeting spot, talk to the fire department.
- Send a copy of the escape plan home with children.

Recognize the fire fighter as a helper.

- Invite a fire fighter to come and speak with the children about fire safety.
- Visit your local fire department.
- Participate in your National Fire Prevention Week activities.
- [Learn Not to Burn Preschool Program](#) lessons for 3-5 year old children.

## Resources

---

Office of the Fire Commissioner  
[www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/fire-safety/public-education](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/fire-safety/public-education)

BIC Play Safe - Be Safe:  
[playsafebesafe.com/](http://playsafebesafe.com/)

Fire Hall Bookstore  
[www.firehallbookstore.com/](http://www.firehallbookstore.com/)

Learn Not to Burn® Preschool Program  
[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

Sparky the Fire Dog:  
[www.sparky.org/](http://www.sparky.org/)

BC Safety Authority  
[www.safetyauthority.ca/safety-information/carbon-monoxide](http://www.safetyauthority.ca/safety-information/carbon-monoxide)

CSA Group Safety Tips  
[www.csagroup.org/consumers/safety-tips/](http://www.csagroup.org/consumers/safety-tips/)

Getting to Know Fire: Available through the Queen's Printer at [www.publications.gov.bc.ca](http://www.publications.gov.bc.ca)

National Fire protection Association  
[www.nfpa.org/public-education](http://www.nfpa.org/public-education)

Underwriters Laboratories of Canada  
[www.ulc.ca](http://www.ulc.ca)

Child Care Licensing Regulation from BC Laws  
[www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/332\\_2007](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/332_2007)

Be sure to review the following safety requirements in the Child Care Licensing Regulation:

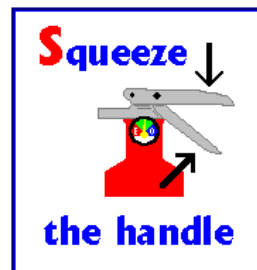
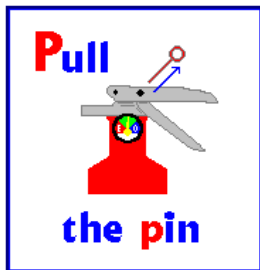
- Section 13 Environment
- Section 15 Furniture, equipment and fixtures
- Section 17 Hazardous objects and substances
- Section 22 Emergency training and equipment
- Section 23 First aid

## How to use a portable fire extinguisher

---

When fighting a fire with portable fire extinguisher, remember the word **PASS**:

1. **PULL the pin**: The pin releases a locking mechanism and will allow you to discharge the extinguisher. Some models require releasing a lock-latch, pressing the lever or another first step.
2. **AIM low**: Point the fire extinguisher nozzle or hose at the base of the fire. This is important! In order to put out the fire, you must smother the fuel that is feeding the fire (i.e., paper).
3. **SQUEEZE the handle**: This releases the extinguishing agent. If the handle is released, the discharge will stop.
4. **SWEEP from side to side**: Sweep the extinguisher back and forth, spraying at the base of the fire and work toward the centre until the fire appears to be out. Operate the extinguisher from a safe distance. Remember: Aim at the base of the fire, not at the flames!



Keep your back to a clear exit when you use the extinguisher so you can get out if the fire gets out of control. If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately. Do not stand too close to the flames and avoid direct exposure to smoke as much as possible. Do not try to fight a fire if you cannot see clearly or if your escape route is blocked.

**REMEMBER:** Your first responsibility is to protect the children in your care. Make sure the children are safely out of the building and the fire department has been called.

**DO NOT RE-ENTER A BURNING BUILDING.**

## Checklist: Fire and Life Safety

It's your responsibility to make your home-based child care setting safe. The following checklist of suggested fire and life safety precautions will help. There may also be additional safety requirements that your licensing officer will advise you of that are not listed below.

Do you have the following fire safety precautions in place?	YES	NO
Fire extinguisher (2A:10B: C) mounted on each floor that is used by children.		
Fire extinguisher is placed in a location close to an escape exit (e.g., door).		
Decorative paper displays and children's art work is limited to no more than 20% of wall space and not hung on exit doors.		
Flammable liquids (i.e. gasoline) and combustible liquids (i.e. oil) stored inside is not more than 30 litres. (Only 10 litres of the total 30 litres may be flammable liquids)		
All flammable/combustible liquids are stored in certified containers and are inaccessible to children.		
All waste baskets /containers are non-combustible (e.g. metal).		
There are two ways of escape on each floor that are used by children. Any locking devices are easy to open from the inside.  WAYS OF ESCAPE: 1st escape route: <input type="checkbox"/> door or <input type="checkbox"/> window 2nd escape route: <input type="checkbox"/> door or <input type="checkbox"/> window		
My emergency escape plan (diagram) and instructions are posted on the wall near exits.		
I will practise my escape plan and fire drills each month with the children in my care.		
I have an emergency evacuation kit and first aid kits.		
I have taken first aid training and will keep it up to date.		
Emergency numbers are clearly posted in a visible location.		
Electrical outlets have safety covers.		
Hazardous items (e.g., cleaning supplies, matches, sharp knives, dangerous tools) are stored out of reach of children.		
Open flames, such as candles and fire pits, are not used while children are present.		
Working smoke alarms are installed on each floor.		
A working carbon monoxide alarm is installed on each floor.		
Heating appliances such as wood, electrical or gas fired stoves are protected with a permanently mounted and secured metal screen.		

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_