



Helping you **identify**  
and **manage risk**

# Safety Practices for Ceremonies Involving Fire

**Unfortunately, fires caused by improper control of open flame and ash disposal have been on the rise. Damages from these fires — in terms of personal injury and property damage — can be devastating.**

While ceremonies involving some forms of fire are important traditional rituals, they can present a significant risk; especially those involving the use of incense, smudging, striking the new Easter fire and handheld candles. That is why establishing

risk control procedures and taking preventative measures is critical.

The following is a list of best practices that should be implemented when holding such ceremonies.

## Incense and Smudging

- Prior to starting the ceremony, ensure the designated room has suitable ventilation or consider holding the ceremony outside when appropriate. Warn those in attendance to take caution if they have allergies or health concerns related to respiratory issues such as asthma.
- Make sure that your premises meet fire prevention standards including fire exit plans; adequate working fire extinguishers; and additional life safety equipment such as fire blankets. Ensure that there are individuals present who are familiar with the proper usage of fire extinguishers.

- Ensure that there is a qualified person present who will be responsible for the charcoal or smudge bundle/sticks during the ceremony and for safely extinguishing charcoal or the smudge bundle/sticks after the ceremony. Be careful while transporting the embers to prevent them from falling onto combustible surfaces.

**Tip: Tin cans such as coffee tins are not safe or approved fire-resistant containers.**

- Ensure the complete extinction of the fire by either stubbing out the embers, by burying them in sand or soaking with water in a fire-resistant metal container containing a quantity of sand. When done, place a metal tight fitting lid on the container. Make sure there are no other combustible materials in the container.
- Ensure that the fire-resistant metal container is positioned away from ornaments, linens, draperies, carpets, books, flammable decorations, and other combustible materials.
- Do not dispose of the ash until the non-combustible container is cool to the touch. Consider waiting at least one day before disposal. Or use water to extinguish and soak the ashes prior to disposal (if the ceremony allows for it). Follow the traditional protocols for the disposal of the cold ashes.

## Striking New Fire at Easter

- When striking the new fire at Easter, do so outside, if possible.
- Use a fire-proof container protected from the wind.
- Use a minimum amount of combustible material.
- Designate a person to either extinguish the fire or remain with it after the Pascal Candle has been lit and the liturgy moves inside.
- Before leaving the premises at the end of the liturgy ensure that the fire is completely out by soaking it well with water.
- If the new fire must be struck indoors use only a flint lighter or something similar.

## Handheld Candles

- When distributing handheld candles or tapers, ensure that each one has a fire retardant shield attached.
- Allow lit candles to be used only for a specific length of time.
- After the service is complete collect all candles and store them safely.

## General

- Store matches and lighters out of the reach of children in a locked secure area away from view.

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