



## Office of Children and Family Services

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September 18, 2025

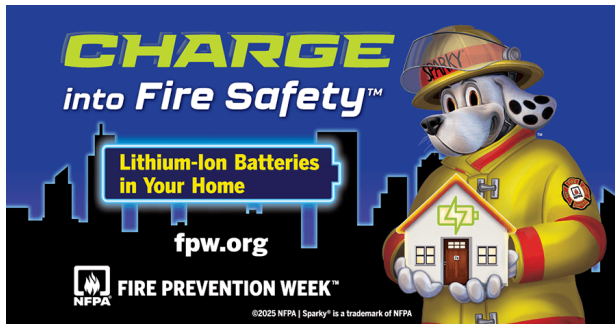
Dear Provider:

Ensuring the safety and well-being of children is an important responsibility. Emergencies, natural disasters, and accidents can happen at any time, and being prepared is essential to protecting the children, staff, and families who rely on you.

September is National Preparedness Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of emergency planning. This is an opportunity to review and strengthen emergency preparedness plans and be sure all staff members are trained on how to respond to emergency situations.



Additionally, October 5<sup>th</sup> through the 11<sup>th</sup> marks Fire Prevention Week (FPW), which is an opportunity to focus on fire safety education. Fires can spread quickly and knowing how to respond effectively is critical. As fire drills are conducted, we encourage you to review escape routes, check smoke detectors, and ensure fire extinguishers are properly maintained. Teaching children basic fire safety skills, such as “stop, drop, and roll,” can empower them with the knowledge to stay safe.



### Fire Prevention Week 2025: “Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home”

FPW is observed each year in commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire, and it is the longest-running public health observance in our country. The [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#) has been the official sponsor of FPW for more than 100 years!

This year’s FPW campaign works to educate everyone about using lithium-ion batteries safely and stresses how important it is to **BUY, CHARGE, and RECYCLE** these batteries safely. Lithium-ion batteries store a lot of energy in a small place, and they can overheat, start a fire, or explode if overcharged or damaged. By learning how to buy, charge, and recycle, you can help prevent a fire in your program.

- **Safety Tips:** Only purchase and use devices that are listed by a qualified testing laboratory and always follow the manufacturer’s instructions. Only use batteries that are designed for the device and put batteries in the device right away. Use the charging cord that came with the device, do not charge a device under your pillow, on your bed, or on a couch, and always charge the batteries in a flat, dry area away from children, direct sunlight, liquids, and tripping hazards.
- **Signs of a Problem:** Stop using the battery if you notice any of the following problems – odor, change in color, change in shape, leaking, odd noises, or if the device is smoking or feels hot to the touch. If it is safe to do so, move the device away from anything that can catch fire, **follow your Emergency Plan**, evacuate the area, and call 9-1-1.
- **Battery Disposal:** Do not put lithium-ion batteries in the trash and never discard batteries in piles. Recycling is always the best option. Visit [www.call2recycle.org/locator](http://www.call2recycle.org/locator) to find a recycling location near you.

Attached are two NYS resources that explain in more detail what lithium-ion batteries are and how they work, as well as highlight important preventative measures and emergency response actions. Please read the attached documents closely and share them with staff and the families you serve. NFPA also offers many educational FPW resources at no cost.

Included in this year's FPW campaign is a toolkit containing coloring sheets and safety tip sheets on a variety of topics (including lithium-ion battery safety) that you can use to creatively incorporate FPW activities into your program. NFPA also provides a buy, charge, recycle tip sheet that may help you in your program and at home. Toolkit materials are available in English, French, and Spanish. [Click here](#) to view and download free FPW resources and activities, or you can visit the NFPA's [Sparky® School House](#) site or [Sparky® Kids](#) to download and print additional fire safety activities for children.

**Below is a list of important fire prevention and safety planning tips.** Please refer to the child care regulations for specific regulatory requirements in these areas:

- ☐ Conduct emergency evacuation drills in accordance with regulation.
- ☐ Have a professional check your heating system regularly. Equipment in disrepair can cause deadly carbon monoxide to build up.
  - Carbon monoxide is odorless, tasteless, and colorless, and can be fatal. Ovens are not an acceptable heating source and should never be used for that purpose.
- ☐ Check smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors regularly and change the batteries as described by manufacturer guidelines.
- ☐ Check fire extinguishers and ensure they are located in areas of your program as required by regulation. Fire extinguishers with gauges should show a full charge and should have unbroken seals (when applicable).
- ☐ Check that electrical outlets are not overloaded and that those not in use are covered with protective caps.
- ☐ Check paths of egress or means of escape regularly to remove obstructions, impediments, and debris. Make sure entrances and exits are clear of snow and ice.
- ☐ Ensure that trash, garbage, and combustible materials are never stored in the furnace room or in rooms or outdoor areas that are ordinarily occupied by or accessible to children.
- ☐ Check that outdoor vents are clear of snow and debris.
- ☐ If bad weather causes a power outage in your area, be sure to follow your emergency plan.
- ☐ Everyone in your program—including parents—should know your program's emergency plan for shelter-in-place or emergency relocation.
- ☐ **If a fire does break out in your program, follow your emergency plan.**

## Resources

The OCFS website is a great resource for child care providers. [Click here](#) to see a list of emergency planning resources. You can also take the e-Learning, *Emergency Preparedness*, at no cost. The training includes important information about preparing for emergencies in child care programs. [Click here](#) to visit the Early Childhood Education Training Program (ECETP) website and search for *Emergency Preparedness*. Below are additional resources - please share them with staff and families!

- [Be Red Cross Ready](#) - become "Red Cross Ready" for an emergency by following simple steps that will help you weather a crisis safely and comfortably and give you confidence to meet the challenge.
- [Ready.Gov Resources for Parents of Young Children](#) - access materials to build a family emergency plan, information for how to help children cope after a disaster, and tips to help children prepare for disasters.
- [Ready.Gov Kids](#) - Ready Kids has tools and information to help before, during, and after disasters.

Materials are available for kids, teens, families, and educators.

- [FEMA.gov New York Alert](#) - sign up for NY-Alert and receive emergency alerts for your area.



Please contact your regulator or enrollment agency if you have questions about regulatory requirements or need assistance with updating your emergency plan.

Thank you for all you do to keep children safe. Have a *wonder-fall* season!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nora Yates".

Nora K. Yates  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Child Care Services