

Title:

All About Fire Safes

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Summary:

Safes provide an extra level of protection from theft or damage for important documents, computer data and other valued items for home and business owners. Fire safes are fire-resistant rather than fireproof, as they eventually succumb to the flames. Unless your home or business is far away from the nearest fire station and the fire is abnormally hot, your safe should have no problem withstanding the flames. Made of hollow sheet metal that is filled with fire-resistant insulation, fire safes are an extremely effective means of protecting your valued items.

Keywords:

theft, damage, fire proof, fire-resistant safes, European standard, fire-resistant insulation, heat-resistant

Article Body:

Safes provide an extra level of protection from theft or damage for important documents, computer data and other valued items for home and business owners. Fire safes are fire-resistant rather than fireproof, as they eventually succumb to the flames. Unless your home or business is far away from the nearest fire station and the fire is abnormally hot, your safe should have no problem withstanding the flames. Made of hollow sheet metal that is filled with fire-resistant insulation, fire safes are an extremely effective means of protecting your valued items.

Homeowners owning firearms also need fire safes for storage purposes. Such safes not only help keep their firearms from being damaged, they also keep the guns secure in storage.

Many business establishments also benefit from fire safes. This is especially true for any organisation that stores valuable archives. Most newspaper offices, for example, store their past editions on microfilm, and any damage to them would lead to a tremendous loss to the paper as well as the community. State archives buildings and museums often store the most valuable pieces in their collection in fire safes.

This guide will provide you with all the information you need to decide the fire safe best suited to your needs.

Primary Considerations

The main questions you should ask yourself before buying a safe are:

What item do I want to protect? Is it cash, documents, jewelry, or computer data?

From what contingency do I want to protect those items - fire or theft?

If you want protection from theft, then what is the value of the items to you in either monetary or sentimental terms?

If you want protection from fire, then consider if the items are paper or plastic media.

Once you have answered these questions, you will have a reasonable idea of the safe best suited to your needs. Shoppers interested in fire safes should consider type, size, and fire ratings. Fire ratings indicate how long the safe will endure a certain temperature for a certain amount of time. The higher the rating is, the more heat-resistant the safe will be.

Types

There are two types of fire safes: data storage and document storage. Both are effective, but offer different degrees of fire resistance. A fire safe designed to protect paper documents from fire and smoke damage keeps the internal temperature of the safe below 170 degrees centigrade. On the other hand, since computer equipment, disks, and videotapes melt at a lower temperature than paper burns, a fire data safe or media safe keeps the internal temperature below 52 degrees centigrade.

Size

Safes are a long-term investment; before choosing a model, it is important to have a clear idea of what you need to protect—both in the present and the future. Before making a purchase, also make sure you consider both the internal and the external dimensions. The safe should fit into its designated space, but should also have enough internal space to store your valuables. To get an idea of the minimum dimensions your safe should have, take the measurements of the largest item you will place in the safe. Purchase a safe with at least 20-25%

more space than you think you will need. There are advantages and disadvantages to a large safe, however. A larger safe does not necessarily assure greater security. Although such safes cannot be removed as easily by a burglar, they cannot be removed by you in case of fire either.

Quality Ratings

Make sure that the safe is certified by ECB•S, which is the European standard for quality safes. The ECB•S provides a serial number on the safe, which serves as a mark of identification of the manufacturer and prevents unauthorised use. Shoppers should also ensure that the product has been manufactured under a certified quality system in accordance with ISO 9000 (EN ISO 9000). A few ECB•S certification marks for fire-resistant safes include EN-1047-1 and VDMA 24991.

You can find a list of the ECB•S members at http://www.fup-gut.de/english/members_e.htm.

Shopping for Safes

There is a substantial number of safe manufacturers and vendors who offer quality products. Watch out for vendors selling used safes, however, as older safes might not be of the same quality as new safes. Ask vendors whether they offer any sort of warranty, in case your safe is damaged in anyway. If the size of your safe is particularly large, then ask the vendor if it can be delivered and installed in the house for you.

Installing the Safe in the House

Fire-resistant safes can be stored anywhere as they are built to resist fire under virtually all circumstances. Concrete does, however, offer an extra layer of protection; place your safe within concrete if you can. If you have a large safe, ensure that you position it in a place that can support its weight.