

PLAY IT SAFE AND PLAN YOUR ESCAPE!

If you have never been in a fire, it's easy to think, "no, it will never happen to me." Hopefully that is the case, but the fact is that thousands of people die each year in home fires. The good news is that you can protect yourself and your family from fire by taking some simple safety steps today.

If Fire Breaks Out... Get Out!

If a fire occurs in your home, your primary goal should be to get out as quickly as possible. There are two key things you can do now to increase your chances of escaping safely in case of a fire:

1. Install [smoke detectors](#).
2. Make and practice an escape plan.

Install Smoke Detectors... So You Have Time To Escape!

Smoke detectors are like fire sentries. Always on the lookout, they spread the word that there's a fire before the fire spreads to you. That way, you've got a chance to get out while there's still time.

More than 50% of fatal residential fires take place at night between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Most of these occur between 2:00 and 4:00 a.m., when people are sleeping. If a fire starts while your family is asleep, smoke detectors will wake you up. They can make the difference between life and death in a fire emergency.

Smoke detectors are easy to install and maintain. You can purchase one inexpensively at hardware and department stores. Here are some important tips about smoke detectors:

- o Position smoke detectors on the ceiling just outside each bedroom and in the escape routes of your home. If you have a multi-level home, install a detector on every floor.
- o Sleep with your bedroom door closed and make sure you can hear the detector in the hall loud and clear. If there is any doubt, or if you smoke, place an additional detector inside your bedroom.
- o Before you buy a detector, make sure it is listed by a recognized testing laboratory.
- o Read the instructions enclosed with your smoke detectors carefully to find out exactly how and where to install them and be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for testing your detectors weekly.
- o Keep extra sets of new batteries on hand so that your detectors are always ready for action.
- o If you have electric powered detectors in your home, you should also install battery powered units as well. In most storms, electricity is lost and your electric smoke detector becomes inoperable. Some electric detectors also have battery backup as an option.

Be Prepared! Plan Your Escape Now!

If a fire occurs, there's no time for planning. Everyone in the family needs to know in advance the best ways to evacuate the home, so they can move quickly-without panic-when the alarm sounds. That's why planning and practicing escape plans are so vital.

Here's how to do it!

- Draw a floor plan of your home and mark all possible escape routes.
- Make sure you know two safe ways out of every room, especially bedrooms.
- Remind everyone to close doors behind them as they evacuate the home. Closed doors can slow down the spread of fire, smoke and heat.
- If you live in a high-rise building, never use elevators during a fire! They may become trapped between floors or can take you directly to the fire floor. Use the stairs instead.
- Consider the special needs of family members. Remember that young, elderly, and disabled persons may need assistance. Locate these individuals as close to an exit as possible. Train the rest of the family to help them get out in an emergency.
- Decide one meeting place outside where all family members assemble after exiting the home. This way, you can make sure that everyone is out.
- PRACTICE YOUR ESCAPE! Conduct home fire drills often. When you practice, vary the drill to prepare for different fire situations. Pretend that certain exits are blocked, so that people have to use their second way out. Determine a signal to begin your drill (you may use the test button on your detector to activate the detector. Using the sound of the detector will allow everyone to become familiar with the sound of the detector) and alert your family in case of a real fire. Evaluate the drill when you're done... could you have escaped faster or more safely?

Call the Fire Department

Once everyone is safely outside at the family meeting place, the next step is to call the fire department. Use the phone at a neighbor's house or nearby phone booth. Never go back into your home for any reason. Make sure all family members know the fire department phone number by heart... **911!**

If the going gets tough...

Even with an early warning from smoke detectors, escaping can be difficult or impossible. Fires can spread very rapidly, blocking exits and creating dangerous smoky conditions. It is important that all family members know what to do when the going gets tough.

- Try to remain calm and do not panic. Focus all of your attention on how to get out safely.
- Smoke is your enemy! Even a few breaths of toxic gases can choke and kill you. If you become trapped in smoke, crawl low, keeping your head down. Smoke and heat rise, so cleaner and cooler air is near the floor.
- Before you exit your room, feel the door. If it is hot, don't open it; use your second way out. If it is cool, exit carefully, but close all doors behind you.
- If smoke, heat or flames block your escape route, stay in the room with the door closed. Stuff sheets, blankets or towels in cracks around the door and around heating and air conditioning vents to keep smoke and fumes out. Open a window at the bottom and the top as long as no smoke is entering the room. Stay low and wave a bright sheet or cloth out the window to signal for help. If there is a phone in the room, call the fire department and tell them where you are.
- If your clothes catch fire, stop, drop, cover and roll! Stop where you are, drop to the ground, cover your face with your hands and roll over and over to smother the flames. Running only fans the fire, making it burn more.