

Home Fire Safety Steps

Creating Your Family Fire Escape Plan

Each year millions of dollars in property are lost due to residential fires. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that over 350,000 homes are affected by its devastation annually. But worse than any financial cost is the loss of life to pets and family members.

Take a moment to think of all the ways in which your home may be vulnerable to fire. Do you own a charcoal grill? Do you have a dryer? Do you have a refrigerator? Do you often relax in the ambiance of your gas fireplace? Do you know that according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) careless smoking is the leading cause of residential fire deaths?

Fire is a very real and powerful potential danger that every homeowner must consider. Fire safety experts say that 1-2 minutes evacuation time is all that is available in many cases. That's why it is so important to have a Family Fire Escape Plan and to clearly communicate your plan to every member of the family.

- **Conduct a family meeting.** Clearly communicate, verbally and with the use of drawings, the importance of knowing and understanding the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire. Plan a visit to a fire station and let younger members of the household view a firefighter in all his/her gear. Young children are often frightened when encountering a firefighter for the first time.
- **Install and test smoke (fire) alarms.** Demonstrate the sound of the smoke (fire) alarm in your house by pressing the test button, so that everyone has heard it ahead of time, especially small children. At a minimum, alarms should be installed on each level of the home and in each bedroom. Alarms should be tested monthly, replacing batteries semi-annually.
- **Establish Alternate Routes.** Ensure two possible exits in each sleeping room with windows and doors that can always be unlocked and opened quickly.
- **Equip Rooms with Escape Ladders.** Store a fire escape ladder in each second floor bedroom.
- **Keep Flashlights on Hand.** A working flashlight or method for signaling out the window of each second floor bedroom should be available and quickly retrievable.
- **Utilize Natural Fire Barrier.** Sleep with bedroom doors closed, when possible, to prevent the spread of fire and smoke. Teach family members to touch the door for heat before opening.
- **Establish a Rendezvous Point.** Designate a special meeting place once outside, preferably at the front of the home. Physically count all members.
- **Know The Plan.** Call 9-1-1 once outside the home.
- **Know This Life Saving Rule.** Instruct all members that no one is to return to the interior of the house once outside.
- **Have Practice Drills.** Schedule a daylight drill, then a nighttime drill. Then do a drill with your eyes closed. Designate in advance a chain of command of household members.

