

Plan Basics

1. Draw a Floor Plan of Your House



As a family, look at routes from each room. Every room should have two possible exits, usually a door and a window. Sketch the shortest, safest way outside from any place in the home. For second floor windows, consider trees, fences, carports, garages or anything that could help someone exit, or get in their way. A fire-resistant escape ladder may be a good investment for a second floor window.

If you live in an apartment building, there may be an exit plan in the corridor that shows how to get out of the building. Still, you need to have a plan for your own apartment. In some cases, your safest exit may not be down the building corridor; it may be out a window or down the fire escape. Know which exit is best for you.

2. Choose a Safe Meeting Place

Choose a safe place, outside, a short but safe distance from your house. Everyone in the family should go to this place immediately. Good choices include a neighbor's mailbox, a special tree, or a street sign - anything that does not move and is easy to recognize.



3. Walk Through the Plan

You don't want any surprises. Make sure all exits are easy to open and easy to access. If you have security bars make sure yours are the quick-release, fire-safe type. Nothing should be blocking a fire exit, including furniture or decorations.

Make whatever adjustments are necessary to your planned routes. That may mean redrawing your plan, making repairs to your house, or both.

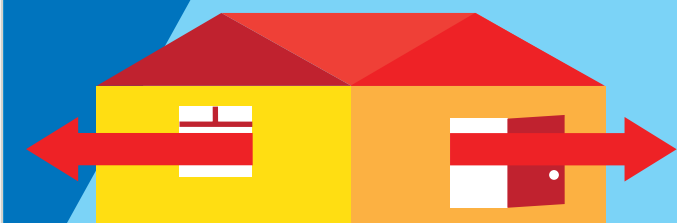
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
SMOKE ALARM SAFETY VISIT:



Every Second Counts



Plan 2 Ways Out!



Special Considerations

If anyone very young, elderly, or disabled lives with you, make special arrangements in your fire escape plan.

- One parent should be responsible for getting a small child.
- It's important to determine if children and others are easily woken by the sound of the smoke alarm. If they do not wake up, be sure that someone is responsible to wake them up as part of your safe escape plan.
- An elderly or disabled person should have a telephone in his or her room. Make sure they can unlock all doors and windows.
- A sign in the bedroom window of anyone who cannot exit alone will alert the fire department.
- People with mobility problems should sleep on the ground floor if possible. Make necessary adjustments (like emergency ramps, wider doorways for wheelchairs and walkers, fire resistant blankets or sprinkler systems) to help an emergency escape.

Practice the Plan

Practice your plan regularly. Practice with the entire family at least twice a year.

Practice during the night and day and in different weather conditions.

- Practice when everyone is home.
- Block off selected exits in advance with signs that say "smoke" or "flames." People will have to use other exits.
- Begin the practice by pressing the test button on the smoke alarm.
- Time the practice from the smoke alarm until everyone has gathered outside at the safe meeting place. Practice until the plan runs smoothly and only takes 3 to 5 minutes.

Safe Escape Tips

- Smoke is the real enemy. 75% of those who die in residential fires are killed by smoke, not by flames.
- Smoke rises. Get low and crawl below smoke. Your head should be 12-24 inches (30-60cm) above the floor.
- It takes 10-15 minutes to burn through a wooden door. Sleep with the doors shut and close doors behind you when escaping.
- Test doors for heat before opening. Use the back of your hand to touch the door, hinges, doorknob and cracks. If you feel heat, use your second exit. If the door is cool, open it slowly, bracing yourself behind it. Peek out. If you see thick smoke, or flames, slam the door and use another exit.
- If you are trapped, stuff clothing under the doors to keep out smoke. Wait at a window for the fire department. If you have a phone, call the fire department to tell them where to find you. Signal to firefighters using a flashlight or light-colored cloth.
- Never go inside a burning building for any reason!



Prevention is Key

Every fire-safe plan begins with prevention. The best way to keep for being the victim of a fire is to never have a fire in the first place.

- Inspect areas of your home that are most prone to fire: the kitchen, electric appliances and wiring, and the heating system. Look for flammable items near heat sources, frayed or worn cords, and poor ventilation of heat sources.
- Install smoke alarms. You need one on every level of your home, outside sleeping areas, and inside each bedroom.
- Smoke alarm batteries should be replaced twice a year, and smoke alarms should be replaced every ten years.
- Keep ABC-type fire extinguishers in your kitchen, your garage and workshops. If a small fire starts, you may be able to put it out before it spreads.

Planning Makes All the Difference!

Fire can spread quickly, leaving as little as one or two minutes to get out safely once the smoke alarm sounds. A fire can be a huge loss, but does not have to mean a loss of life. A Safe Escape Plan can make all the difference. Be sure your family knows what to do if a fire strikes.

How much of a difference can it make?

- A house fire is not bright; it is pitch black. If you have practiced an exit plan many times, you will automatically know what to do - even in dark smoke.
- Children tend to panic in a fire. A common reaction is to hide from the flames. Children who know how to escape, won't lose their life hiding in a closet or under the bed.
- Children under the age of 5 are twice as likely to die in a fire. Plan in advance to help young children escape and make their odds of survival higher.
- Elderly and disabled family members may need assistance or special accommodations to escape a fire. With a good plan, a person can help them escape, or other preventative measures can be taken to help them escape themselves.

