

Fire Drills

Home Fire Drills — Escape With Your Life

You wake from a sound sleep, choking and coughing. Your bedroom is filled with thick, black smoke. You can't see, and you can barely breathe. You and your family have 90 seconds to get out of the house before it is engulfed in flames.

Quick! — What should you do?

When fire strikes is not the time to improvise. Plan ahead and practice your escape plan. Most fire experts agree that besides having a functional smoke alarm, the next best thing you can do to increase your fire safety is to plan and conduct fire drills. Smoke alarms can provide the warning you need, but your smoke alarm will not get you out of the house. Waking up to the shriek of a smoke alarm and finding smoke in your house is not the time to think, "Uh-oh! What do I do now?"

Make sure your smoke alarms work. And, teach your children about fire safety. Fires kill 4,000 Americans a year and injure more than 25,000. Don't become a statistic.

Plan Ahead

Plan Fire Drills

In a typical home fire, people only have about two minutes to get outside. The more prepared your family is, the more likely it is that everyone will get out alive and uninjured.

- ♦ Sit down with your family and draw a map of your home. It doesn't have to be perfect -- just enough to show all rooms and all the ways out. It's important to have two escape routes out of every room in your house or apartment in case one is blocked by fire. This is especially important for sleeping areas.
 - Windows: Make sure that windows haven't been painted shut and can unlock and open easily. Security bars should have quick release devices that everyone knows how to use.
 - Doors: Everyone in the household should be able to unlock and open doors, even in the dark. If a door requires a key or special action to unlock it, which a child (or confused adult) would not be able to perform, that door would be useless during a fire. Consider replacing the locks with something more fire-safe. If not, take it out of your escape plan.
 - Furniture: Keep furniture and other heavy objects out of the way of doors and windows.
- ♦ If you live in a multi-story house and one of your escape routes is through a window, make sure there is a safe way to reach the ground, such as a UL-approved fire-resistant escape ladder.

Practice using it in your drills so that whoever must use it, becomes proficient. In the quick set-up and use of the ladder. During an actual fire is not the time to learn.

- ♦ If you have young children, decide in advance who is responsible for helping them get out of the house.
- ♦ Make special arrangements for older adults or people with disabilities. People who have difficulty moving should have a phone in their sleeping area, and, if possible, should sleep on the ground floor near an exit.
- ♦ Choose a safe place in front of your house or apartment building for your family to meet after escaping from the fire. Having a meeting place will let you know that everyone has gotten out safely and no one will get hurt looking for someone who is already safe.
- ♦ Once you are out, stay out!

Conduct Fire Drills

- ♦ Although planning your fire drills provides some benefit, to be useful, you must hold practice fire drills, especially at night. Fifty percent of fire deaths in the home occur between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. Make your fire drill realistic. Turn the lights off. Pretend some exits are blocked by fire or smoke and practice alternate escape routes. Hold drills often enough so that all occupants are familiar with the drill procedure and their conduct during a drill is a matter of established routine.
 - During your fire drill is an excellent time to also practice "Stop-Drop-and-Roll". If your clothing catches on fire, you should:
 1. Stop where you are. Running is the worst thing you can do. It will fan the flames, making them grow faster.
 2. Drop to the ground. If you are standing, the flames will rise up around your face.
 3. Roll over and over with your hands covering your face. By covering your face, you keep the fire/smoke from getting into your lungs.

Special Places

Another benefit of planning and conducting fire drills is that it can help you evaluate the safety (or risks) of special places in your home. For example, say you have an extra bedroom in the basement or in an attic accessed by a small staircase. Everything may seem fine until you plan and conduct your drill and you realize that the one staircase up from the basement, or down from the attic, could easily be blocked by a fire in the kitchen, for example. This may result in you providing additional ways out of these areas, additional safety feature, or moving the extra sleeping area to a safer place.

Before a Fire Starts

Smoke Alarms

The chance of dying in a fire is cut in half when you have a working smoke alarm in your home.

- ♦ At a minimum, install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement, and beside each sleeping area. Proper placement is on the ceiling. However, if a wall must be used, install the alarms at a minimum distance of 4 inches and a maximum distance of 12 inches from the ceiling. Installation instructions should come with every smoke alarm you buy. Read the instructions and follow them - a smoke alarm installed improperly may not provide sufficient warning or may cause too many "false alarms".
 - Be sure any unit you purchase is UL-listed.
 - Test smoke alarms at least once a month or as required by the manufacturer's instructions.
 - Change the batteries at least once a year or as recommended by the manufacturer. (There are new ten-year smoke alarms that do not require battery replacement every year.)
 - Replace smoke alarms every ten years at a maximum. After ten years, the electronics may fail without warning.
 - Place and maintain portable fire extinguishers in your house. The home must contain at least one U.L. approved fire extinguisher, highly visible, easily accessible, and in working condition, weighing not less than 5 pounds, that has a rating of 2A 10 BC.

Teach Children Fire Safety

Kids need to be taught about the dangers of fire and what to do so they can act quickly in a fire emergency. An unprepared child might become scared and try to hide under the bed or in a closet instead of getting out of the building.

- ♦ Let your children hear what the smoke alarm sounds like.
- ♦ Practice crawling low under smoke. It is estimated that smoke and toxic gases produced as a fire develops and spreads cause three-fourths of childhood fire deaths. Teach children to cover their mouths and noses with a t-shirt or anything within reach.
- ♦ Show children how to touch doors before opening. (See below.)
- ♦ Remind them not to stop to get a toy or to call 9-1-1. Just get out!
- ♦ Teach children never to go back into a burning building.

- ♦ Teach them that their job during a fire is to get out of the building and wait for you at the meeting place. Their job is not to rescue their toys, their pet or you.

If Fire Strikes

- ♦ Get out as fast as possible and go to the meeting spot. Do not stop to grab photographs or look for pets.
- ♦ If there is smoke in the room, stay low or crawl to your exit.
- ♦ Cover your mouth and nose with a shirt or other cloth (wet, if possible) to protect your lungs from smoke and toxic gasses.
- ♦ Fire may be just on the other side of a door - always test doors before opening them. While kneeling or crouching at the door, reach up as high as you can, and with the back or hand, touch the door, the knob, and the crack between the door and the frame. If you feel any warmth at all, use another escape route. If the door feels cool, open it carefully. Put your shoulder against the door and open it slowly. Be prepared to slam it if there is smoke or flames on the other side.
- ♦ Do not go back into a burning house or apartment building.
- ♦ Go to your meeting place and take attendance. If someone is missing, tell the fire fighters. They are equipped to perform rescues safely.
- ♦ Call the fire department from a neighbor's house, portable phone or alarm box.
- ♦ If you cannot escape, put towels or fabric (wet if possible) around doors to block off smoke, crawl to a window and open it. Yell out the window for help and wave light-colored cloth or a flashlight for attention. If there is a phone in the room, call 9-1-1.

Apartments and Condos

Note the exact location of stairways and any fire doors that may automatically shut during a fire. During a fire, use the stairs to escape. Do not use the elevators. Elevators may stop between floors or take you to where the fire is burning, or they may be needed by the firefighters. Some high-rise buildings may have evacuation plans that require you to stay where you are and wait for the fire department.

When You are Out or Traveling

Whenever you are in another building, such as a restaurant, hotel or theater, always take a moment when you get there to look around to familiarize yourself with your surroundings and to find your nearest exit. This will help you respond to all types of emergencies, not just fires. Note that most hotels will provide you with fire safety information in your room, including a fire escape drawing (usually located on the inside of your room door). Always take a minute to discuss this information with those traveling with you.

Tornado Safety

In an average year 1,000 tornadoes are reported, resulting in 80 deaths and over 1,500 injuries. Tornadoes have been reported in every state and can happen at any time of the year. Take tornadoes seriously, because with winds blowing at 200 mph or more, a tornado can destroy just about anything in its path. Always listen to the radio and television for the latest information and instructions for your area.

A TORNADO WATCH means tornadoes are possible in your area. Stay tuned to the radio or television news.

A TORNADO WARNING means a tornado is either on the ground or has been detected by Doppler radar. Seek shelter immediately!

BEFORE A TORNADO:

- ♦ Have a disaster plan. Make sure everyone knows where to go in case a tornado threatens.
- ♦ Make sure you know which county or parish you live in.
- ♦ Prepare a disaster supplies kit for your home and care. Include a first aid kit, canned food and a can opener, bottled water, battery-operated radio, flashlight, protective clothing and written instructions on how to turn off electricity, gas and water.

DURING A TORNADO:

- ♦ Go to a basement.
- ♦ If you do not have a basement, go to an interior room without windows on the lowest floor, such as a bathroom or closet.
- ♦ If you can, get under a sturdy piece of furniture, like a table.
- ♦ If you live in a mobile home, get out. They offer little protection against tornadoes.
- ♦ Get out of automobiles. Do not try to outrun a tornado in your car, leave it immediately.
- ♦ If you're outside, go to a ditch or low-lying area and lie flat in it.
- ♦ Stay away from fallen power lines, and stay out of damaged areas.

IF YOU'RE AT SCHOOL DURING A TORNADO:

- ♦ Every school should have a disaster plan and have frequent drills.
- ♦ Basements offer the best protection.

- ♦ Schools without basements should use interior rooms and hallways on the lowest floor away from windows.
- ♦ Crouch down on your knees and protect your head with your arms.

AFTER A TORNADO:

- ♦ Stay indoors until it is safe to come out.
- ♦ Check for injured or trapped people, without putting yourself in danger.
- ♦ Watch out for downed power lines.
- ♦ Use a flashlight to inspect your home.

Emergency Drills

Acknowledgment and Understanding

1 Hour Credit

Our foster home has a plan for foster parent(s) and foster children to follow in case of emergency or disaster. The plan includes provisions for roles and responsibilities during an emergency, evacuation of the family foster care home, and the assignment of a central meeting place where each individual may be accounted for.

Fire exit drills are held often enough so that all occupants are familiar with the drill procedure and their conduct during the drill is a matter of established routine.

Drills are held at unexpected times and under varying conditions to simulate the conditions of an actual fire.

Drills emphasize orderly evacuation under proper discipline rather than speed. Running or horseplay is not permitted.

Drills include suitable procedures for ensuring that all persons in the foster family care home actually participate.

Records of fire drills are recorded by the family foster care home.

Smoke alarm devices are regularly used in the conduct of drills.

There are special provisions for the evacuation of any foster child with a disability in the family foster care home.

The family foster care home takes special care to help emotionally disturbed or perceptually handicapped foster children understand the nature of such drills.

Tornado drills are held often enough so that all occupants are familiar with the drill procedure and conduct during a drill as a matter of established routine.

Records of tornado drills are recorded by the family foster care home.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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