

# Fire Safety



# A Fire Detection or Smoke Warning System Could Save Your Life

Contrary to popular belief, the smell of smoke will not awaken you. As a matter of fact, the poisonous gases actually put you into a deeper sleep. Since the majority of fatal fires happen at night, it is essential to have working smoke detectors throughout your home to awaken you in a fire emergency.



For the best protection, make sure you have at least one smoke detector on each level of your home and in or near all sleeping areas. Test the alarms each week and replace the batteries once a year. Detectors that are part of a monitored system can automatically summon the fire department. In addition to early warning systems, technology is available for

fire sprinkler systems in homes and other dwellings. This technology should always be used with early warning detection systems.

## The first rule of survival—GET OUT IMMEDIATELY!

When fire strikes your home, authorities say you may have as little as one to two minutes to escape. It is imperative that you have a well rehearsed Escape Plan which includes all members of the family that are old enough to understand, and provides for those that are not.

Studying and practicing a plan, such as the one recommended in this booklet, could save lives! When dealing with a fire, there is no time to gather personal belongings. The time you take trying could mean the difference between life and death. So always follow the golden rule of survival in the event of a fire, and GET OUT IMMEDIATELY!

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 80% of fire deaths happen in the home. As a leading provider of home security systems, we wanted to do something to reduce this alarming statistic.



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# When Dealing With a Fire, Remember These Important Pointers



## Smoke is Thick and Dark

Smoke is so thick and dark that you can hardly see the flames. You may feel lost and disoriented in the thick smoke that accompanies fire, even in your own bedroom. You must know how to escape your home in the dark.

## The Heat is Intense

At knee height, the temperature in a fire may be about 90°. At shoulder height, a burning fire can be as hot as 690°. When escaping, always remember to stay as close to the floor as possible in a crawling position.

## Prearrange a Meeting Place

Define a meeting spot that is easy to reach such as a lamppost, a neighbor's driveway, fire hydrant, street sign, etc. The meeting spot should be a safe distance from your home. The meeting place is where all family members know to go immediately after escaping. Once everyone is accounted for, a responsible family member should go to a neighbor's home or use a cell phone to call the Fire Department. This person should return immediately to the meeting place once help has been called.

## Gather Those Who Need Assistance

Gather children and any disabled persons that are in your home and get out. Do not waste time calling the fire department. You can do this after you are out.

## Material Objects Can Be Replaced

Do not go back into a burning home for material objects. Go back only to save a life. If at all possible, pull the door closed behind you upon escaping, to hamper the spread of the fire accelerated by a draft.

## Do Not Try to Fight the Fire

Let the firefighters do their job. Just get out of the way of danger.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, home structure fires cause approximately 82% of civilian fire deaths and 74% of civilian fire injuries.



- Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries. Unattended cooking is the leading factor contributing to these fires. WATCH WHAT YOU COOK. STAY IN THE KITCHEN AND STAY ALERT.



- Smoking has been the leading cause of home fire deaths for decades. PUT IT OUT. ALL THE WAY. EVERY TIME.



- Candles are the second leading cause of home fire injuries. KEEP CANDLES AT LEAST 12 INCHES FROM ANYTHING THAT CAN BURN AND NEVER LEAVE A BURNING CANDLE UNATTENDED.



- Overloaded electrical distribution or lighting equipment causes fire. DON'T OVERLOAD ELECTRICAL CIRCUITS.

# A General Outline for Your Emergency Escape Plan



**BE SURE TO TEST YOUR FIRE AND SMOKE WARNING SYSTEM WEEKLY AND KEEP REPLACEMENT BATTERIES ON HAND.**

Unfortunately, escaping a fire is rarely easy. Because of the unpredictable nature of fire, and the manner in which it spreads, it is difficult to know where and when it might strike. For this reason, it is important to establish certain procedures in advance to facilitate a successful escape.

If you practice these procedures at least once a month by actually rehearsing the moves with your family, at night as well as during the day, you will greatly increase the chances of a safe escape. Make sure that everyone in the family knows what the alarm signal means and participates in these trial runs, including the young, the aged and the baby sitter. It is particularly important to

stress the location of the meeting place outside the home. All too often, a family member risks his or her life going back into a burning home to rescue a child that has been out and safe at a neighbor's house.

## 1. Don't Jump Up Out of Bed

If you awaken and sense a fire, do not jump up out of bed. Remember, the heat gets more intense the farther from the floor you are. So, instead, roll out of bed onto the floor.

## 2. Crawl to the Door

After you roll out of bed onto the floor, crawl over to the door, which you should always keep closed while you are asleep. (The door acts as an insulator from the fire, should it be coming from the hall outside the door.) Touch the door, both low and higher up to see if it is hot. If it is, **DO NOT OPEN IT!** Instead, plan to use an alternate route.

## 3. Try the Door

If it is not hot to the touch, open the door about one to two inches only, slowly bracing it firmly, as there may be pressure from gases on the other side. Brace your foot against the door so that pressure does not force it to open quickly. If the air from behind it is warm, do not use the hallways. Pull the door shut and use an alternate escape route.



#### 4. Instruct Your Children

Shout to your children to stay in their rooms with their doors closed. Remind them to open a window no more than three inches from the bottom to avoid drafts which tend to fan the flames (an important note to include in your pre-disaster rehearsal instructions). They should crouch at this window and breathe the fresh air that comes in.

#### 5. How to Crawl to Safety

If you are able to crawl to safety via the hallways, be sure to keep your head about one to two feet off the floor. This is vital, as the intense heat rises to a point above this height and the noxious gases produced by burning materials tend to amass below this level. Cover your nose and mouth with a cloth (preferably wet). Take short, shallow breaths.



#### 6. Outside Ladders Help In Rescue

Have a sturdy ladder that can reach all second level windows readily available outside your house. This will aid you in rescuing others that may be trapped inside. Be sure to keep the ladder in a place that is secure from burglars.

#### 7. Escape Ladders



Keep an escape ladder secured at the window of each bedroom above the first level, and instruct family members in advance on how to use them in the event that the hallways are not safe. Practice using the escape ladder from a first floor window to make sure you can do it quickly.

#### 8. Never Jump Out of a Window In a Panic

A hasty jump may cause an injury that renders you helpless to vacate the area or help rescue others. Try to remain calm. If you must escape through a window without the aid of a ladder, hang from the sill by your hands first to lessen the drop. Drape bedclothes over the sill if you had to break the glass to exit to avoid cutting yourself on the way out.

#### 9. Plan Ahead!

We cannot overstress the importance of planning ahead! Planning in advance can save your family's lives. Work out primary and alternate routes of escape for each member of your family. Review these plans and the pointers in this booklet carefully and regularly with everyone. Be explicit. Quiz your children on all of these points to be sure they understand the plan.



## Practice a Fire Drill



Practicing a fire drill ensures that your emergency escape plan goes smoothly in the event of a real fire.

Follow these tips.

1. **Draw** your escape plan. Know where to meet outside.
2. **Go** over your plan together.
3. **Keep** the way out clear.
4. **Put** your plan where everyone can see it.
5. **Time** your fire drill.
6. **Get** out fast.
7. **Practice** getting out when people are asleep too.
8. **Go** to your established meeting place which is outside of the home.
9. **In** a real fire, call 9-1-1 from outside.



## STOP, DROP and ROLL

If your clothing catches fire remember the phrase, “STOP, DROP and ROLL.” This can save your life and limit your burn injuries. Stop where you are. Drop to the floor. Roll back and forth to smother the fire. If someone else’s clothing catches fire, help them by telling them to stop, drop and roll. If they attempt to run, use a heavy rug or blanket to try to stop them and use it to smother the flames if you can do so safely.

### **STOP**



If your clothing or hair catches fire, stop! Do not run! Running will make the fire worse because the moving air will fan the flames.

### **DROP**



Drop to the floor or ground. Get to the ground as quickly as possible. If you can, cover your face and mouth with your hands to protect yourself from smoke and flames.

### **ROLL**



To put out the flames, roll back and forth. Do it again and again until the fire goes out. Fire needs air to burn. Rolling will stop the flames by taking away the air. Keep rolling back and forth until flames are out.

Everyone in your family should learn how to stop, drop and roll, including grownups. Practice often, especially with young children.



## Special Note to Apartment Dwellers



If you live in an apartment, you should know the locations of the stairway and fire exits outside of your apartment building. Never use the elevator during a fire. It could break down or bring you right to the source of the fire. Always use the stairs in a fire emergency.

In some cases, the safest action when a fire alarm sounds may be to stay inside your apartment and protect yourself from smoke until the fire department arrives.

- You can seal all doors and vents with duct tape or towels to prevent smoke from entering your room.
  - Let fresh air in the room by opening a window at the top and bottom.
- Call the fire department and let them know that you are still inside.
  - To help the fire department locate you, wave a flashlight or light cloth at the window.

Detailed procedures, verbal instructions and even past experience may not be adequate to help you deal with extraordinary events. This is why it is important to have a fire escape plan.

**React:** Take any indication of smoke, fire or other potentially threatening situation seriously. Activation of building fire alarms, smell of smoke, visual indication of flames, warning from other occupants, arrival of the fire department are some of the attributes that may signal an imminently dangerous situation.

**Evaluate:** You must judge the level of threat. This includes confirming evidence or presence of smoke or fire; judging the conditions in your immediate area; self-judgment of your physical ability to relocate or evacuate; evaluation of the needs and abilities of others who may need assistance; consider additional information being received.



**Decide:** There are only two, but difficult choices: Follow your plan and immediately leave the building.

**OR:**

Follow your plan and stay where you are or descend to the designated level below the fire floor. Be prepared to wait for a considerable time period (at least on hour) if you contemplate rescue by the fire department.

Becoming familiar with these detailed procedures may prepare you and save your life in a dangerous fire situation.



## Developed with information from:

**National Fire Protection Association**

[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

**New York City Fire Department**

[www.nyc.gov/html/fdny](http://www.nyc.gov/html/fdny)

**Home Safety Council**

[www.homesafetycouncil.org/index.aspx](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org/index.aspx)

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