

Fire Escape Planning

Home Escape Planning

If a fire broke out in the middle of the night, would you and your family be able to escape safely? Although most Americans believe they could get out alive, according to the NFPA (Nation Fire Protection Association), only a small number (16%) have actually developed and practiced a home fire escape plan to ensure they could escape quickly and safely.

Some 4,000 fire deaths occur in U.S. homes every year, and too often it's because people did not, or could not, get out of a burning home in time. Developing and practicing a home fire escape plan is the key to survival.

The elements of an effective home fire escape plan include the following:

- Working smoke alarms on every level of the home and outside all sleeping areas
- Two ways out of each room
- Unobstructed and easy-to-use exits
- A meeting place outside
- A posted emergency phone number for the fire department
- Practicing the plan at least twice a year with every member of the household

Everyone, including preschoolers, can be taught the basics of fire escape. If there are infants or family members with mobility limitations, someone in the household should plan to assist them. Also make sure that doors needed for escape can be opened easily, and that windows are not nailed or painted shut. The most important thing to remember is to react to the sound of a smoke alarm immediately and make getting out your top priority.

This year, in conjunction with fire departments throughout the U.S. and Canada, NFPA is seeking to increase the number of families that are prepared to escape a home fire by encouraging them to practice their home fire drills during "The Great Escape" North American unified fire drill on Wednesday, October 11 at 7 p.m. NFPA, the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week for more than 75 years, launched "The Great Escape" in 1998 as a three-year public awareness initiative that encourages people across North America to develop and physically practice a home fire escape plan. We already know it's working -- 56 lives saved as a direct result have already been documented.

Office Fire Safety

Would you know what to do if there was a fire in your office building?

Plan Ahead

All employees should:

1. Know the location of the nearest fire alarm, know how to use it, and be familiar with the sound it makes.
2. Learn the location of two exits from all work areas.
3. Always participate in workplace fire drills.
4. Post the fire department's emergency phone number on or near the telephone.
5. Count the doors or desks between your work area and the nearest exit. During a fire, it may be necessary to escape in the dark.
6. Be sure that someone in authority knows if you have any temporary or permanent disability that could delay your escape. Work with them and your local fire department to develop appropriate procedures to protect you in a fire.

Employers should:

1. Conduct regular mandatory fire drills at least twice a year.
2. Post building evacuation programs and discuss them during new-employee orientations.
3. Include employees with special needs in the emergency planning process.

If fire strikes...

- Sound the alarm and call the fire department, even if the fire appears small.
- Leave quickly, closing doors as you go to contain fire and smoke.
- If you encounter smoke or flame during your escape, use another exit. Since heat and smoke rise, cleaner and cooler air will be near the floor. If you must exit through smoke, crawl on your hands and knees toward your exit, keeping your head in the "safety zone" one to two feet (30 – 60 centimeters) above the floor.
- Test doors before you open them. Kneel at the door; reach up as high as you can and touch the door, the knob, the space between the door and its frame with the back of your hand. If the door is warm, use another escape route. If the door is cool, open it slowly and be prepared to slam it shut if smoke or heat rushes in.
- Follow the directions of fire and security personnel. Once outside, move away from the building, out of the way of firefighters, and stay out until the fire department says you may go back in.

If you stay...

- If you cannot escape safely or if you're instructed to stay where you are, be calm and protect yourself.
- If possible, go to a room with an outside window and a telephone, closing all doors between you and the fire.
- Use duct tape or stuff the crack around the door with towels, rags, or bedding and cover vents to keep the smoke out of the room.

- If there's a telephone in the room where you're trapped, call the fire department emergency number and tell them exactly where you are. Do this even if you can see fire trucks from your window.
- Wait at a window and signal for help with a flashlight beam, if you have one, or by waving a sheet or other light-colored cloth.
- If possible, open the window at the top and bottom to allow fresh air in, but close it quickly if smoke from outside comes in. Do not break the window.
- Be patient. Rescuing all occupants may take several hours.