

Home Exit Drills

E.D.I.T.H. - Exit Drills In the Home

Planning a Safe Escape Your family can survive even a major fire in your home if you have working smoke alarms to alert you of a fire and have practiced a home escape plan to get out quickly.

Important Survival Tips:

- Install working smoke alarms and test them every month.
- Make a home escape plan and practice it.

Once you are alerted to a fire, there is no time to plan your escape. Take time now to make a home escape plan.

- **Draw a floor plan of your home:**
 - Show two ways out of every room - especially the sleeping areas. Everyone in the household should know the escape routes.
- **Determine a meeting place:**
 - Everyone in the household should gather in the family meeting place after escaping a fire. One person should go to a neighbour's house or the nearest phone in a safe location to contact the Fire Department. Be sure to know the emergency telephone number for your area.
- **Practice your plan:**
 - Hold regular fire drills in your home so that everyone can practice the plan. Make your practice realistic by blocking some exits and using alternate escape routes.

Simple Survival Tips:

- Check doors before opening them. Be sure to check a door by kneeling or crouching behind the door, reach up high and touch the door, knob and the frame. If the door feels cool, open it with caution. Put your shoulder against the door and open it slowly. Slam the door shut if you see smoke or flames on the other side.
- Windows and locks should be easy for any family member to quickly open and unlock. Security bars on windows should have a quick release mechanism.
- If you are trapped, close all the doors between you and the fire. Use blankets or clothes to fill the cracks around the door to keep out the smoke. Signal for help at a window by waving a light coloured cloth or flashlight and yelling for help. If there is a telephone in the room call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number and report where you are.
- Crawl low under smoke. In a fire, smoke containing toxic gases and heat rises toward the ceiling.

This means the cleanest air is closest to the floor. If there is smoke blocking your primary exit, use another escape route. However, if you must exit through the smoke, stay low by crawling on your hands and knees.

- Get out quickly and safely. When the smoke alarm sounds, immediately start your escape. Do not try to gather possessions or pets. No possessions are worth your life!
- Get out and stay out. Once you have escaped from the burning building, do not go back inside for any reason.
 - If you must escape from an upper story window of a multi-level home, make sure you have a safe way to the ground, such as a fire escape ladder.

Special Situations:

- **Older Adults:**
 - An older adult with restricted mobility should sleep on the ground floor. A special plan should also be made to provide assistance to them.
- **Children:**
 - Infants and most young children will also need assistance when escaping from the home. A special plan should also be made to provide assistance to them. Pre-school age children should be taught along with older children the steps to follow when escaping from the home. Children should be involved with making and practicing your home escape plan.
- **People with physical disabilities:**
 - Anyone with physical disabilities should have their bedroom on the ground floor. A special plan should be made to provide assistance to them when escaping. If a family member has a hearing impairment, special smoke alarms are available.
- **Public Buildings:**
 - Look for exit signs. Knowing your escape route is always important, even when shopping, visiting the library, or inside public buildings. If you hear a fire alarm while in a public building, immediately follow the instructions given over the public address system or from adults working in the building.

Home Fire Protection:

- **Smoke Alarms:**
 - Most fatal home fires happen at night when people are at home asleep. Working smoke alarms provide protection by sounding an alarm when the fire starts, alerting people of the fire and allowing time to escape. It is important to install working smoke alarms in your home and test them monthly to ensure they are functioning properly.

- **Automatic Fire Sprinklers:**

- Automatic fire sprinklers control or extinguish fires in the early stages by spraying water on them. Fire sprinklers only activate in the area of the fire. Fire sprinklers are recommended for all residences for added fire safety. Call your local fire department or building department for more information.