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Be Prepared: Home Fire Escape Plan

In case you have a fire in your home, each family member must know what to do. A home escape plan must be created and everyone should practice.

An average of 800 fires strike homes each day in the United States. Most of these fires occur between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. and deaths from those fires occur most between midnight and 4 a.m. when most people are sleeping.

No matter the cause of the fire, a home may be filled with smoke. Family members may be unable to see very well causing a very dangerous situation. The smoke and toxic gases may cause dizziness and disorientation. In the confusion, one can become lost or trapped inside the home. It is very important for family members to understand that their safety depends upon them leaving the house quickly.

The following steps will help you and your family with a home fire escape plan.

Plan Ahead – Install smoke detectors. Test regularly to make sure they are in working order. Close bedroom doors when sleeping. Fire takes 10 to 15 minutes to burn through a wooden door giving you and your family more time to escape. Have two escape routes out of each room. Example: The normal door exit and another exit such as a window.

Plan an Escape Route – Practice opening windows getting familiar with their operation. Jammed windows should be repaired. If a window is jammed during a fire, it may be broken. Use a towel or blanket to cover broken glass. It is safer to open a window instead of breaking it.

Realize the Danger of Smoke – Smoke and heat rise. Talk to your family about the importance of crawling low under smoke. Drop on hands and knees and crawl to the nearest exit. Test all doors before opening. Touch the door. If it is hot, do not open it and try your second escape route. If you open the door, open it slowly. Shut it if there are flames. Shut doors between you and the smoke. Stuff cracks and vents to keep smoke out.

Establish a Safe Meeting Place – Family members should agree on a stationary place to meet a safe distance from the house. Example: A large tree, the neighbor's driveway, or the mailbox. Having a meeting place prevents family members from wandering around looking for one another. After gathering at your meeting place, send someone to call 911. Once outside, no one should re-enter the burning building.

Provide for Those Requiring Additional Help – Special provisions may be required for infants, young children, disabled or elderly family members who may need help when escaping. Include these in your fire escape plan. Have children practice saying the fire department number, their full name, and address into a phone and to another person.

Practice Your Fire Escape Plan – Make a floor diagram of your house. Mark normal and emergency routes and post in all rooms. Put each family member in their bed and practice.

Exit Safely from a Structure – Practice opening windows. If you have a second story, you might purchase fire ladders and instruct each member on how to use them.

Remember...Plan Ahead! – The first step toward escaping a fire is to plan ahead. Practice your plan through out the year. If something around your home changes, include or revise your plan.

It has been proven that practiced exit drills reduce chances of panic and injury and better the chances of survival during a real fire.

Source: phoenix.gov