

HOME ESCAPE PLANNING

Designing and practicing a home escape plan will help your family survive a home fire. Since fire spreads quickly, early detection is a must. If you haven't done so already, install smoke alarms on each level of your home, and in each bedroom if possible. Then follow the directions listed below to design a home escape plan for your family.

- Gather the entire family and test your smoke alarms. Now everyone knows the sound of the smoke alarm. Test each smoke alarm weekly and change the battery when you change your clock to and from day light savings time.
- Draw a floor plan of your home showing each door and window of each room. Be sure everyone understands two ways out of each room.
- Check to be sure that all doors and windows open as designed. Make repairs or alterations to accommodate the physical capabilities of your family. If you have security bars on windows, they should have a quick release mechanism.
- If the second way out of the rooms on the upper floor(s) of your home is through a window, and there is not direct access to a roof or other structure purchase an escape ladder.
- Be sure children understand that an escape ladder is for emergency use only and be sure they know how to use it.
- If you live in an apartment building, you should know two ways off your floor. In the event of a fire, use the stairs and not the elevator.
- Agree on a meeting place outside where the entire family can meet after everyone has exited the home.
- Have a place outside where you can call 911 to report the fire, using a neighbor's phone or a cell phone.
- Practice your home escape plan at least twice a year (e.g. when you change your clocks). If someone in your home needs assistance, assign a family member to assist him or her.
- If there are children in your home, practice the escape plan until you are certain they understand what to do. Practice crawling beneath the smoke and heat to the exit and practice testing doors, with the back of the hand, for warmth before opening. Children should know that if the door is warm, fire is nearby, use the second way to get out.
- Activate the test button on the smoke alarm after the children have gone to bed and see how they respond. Practice makes perfect.
- For more information about home escape planning and fire safety, you can go to the National Fire Protection Association's web site at www.nfpa.org.