

Practice Your Home Escape Plan



NOW is the time to plan and practice your home fire escape plan!

Everyone thinks that tragedies like home fires happen in other communities and to other people. That's probably what the people affected by the 381,000 home fires that occurred in the United States in 2005 thought too, before it happened to them. Unlike many things that can get postponed for a day or two with little consequence, planning and practicing your home fire escape simply isn't one of them.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 3,030 were killed in those fires – that's one person every three hours. Does preparing for escape still sound like something that can be put off for another day?

As well as being prepared to escape a fire, it is equally important to be vigilant about preventing one from happening in the first place. Many times there is something that you can do so that a fire doesn't start, like paying attention to what you are cooking, for example. Cooking is the number one cause of home fires and unattended cooking is the leading cause. The next time you have dinner on the stove and think about leaving the room, think again.

If a fire occurs don't you want to be prepared to escape from it? If you and your neighbors have not taken the time to plan and practice your home fire escape plan, unfortunately you are not alone – nationally studies show that only 23% of households have. This is something that can literally mean the difference between surviving a fire or being the victim of one.

It's time for everyone to get ready for the very real possibility that a fire can occur in their home and being prepared to escape from one is extremely important.

Here's what you need to do right now:

- Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home and have one inside each sleep room and outside of each sleeping area.
- Test smoke alarms at least once a month.
- Develop a fire escape plan that identifies two ways out of each room and a family meeting place outside.
- Make sure your plan allows for any specific needs in your household. If everyone knows what to do, everyone can get out quickly.

- Practice using the plan, at least twice a year. If everyone knows that everyone else is ready to exit quickly, no one will lose precious time trying to help someone who doesn't need help.
- Some children and adults might not awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm. They may need help to wake up.

Don't let another day go by without planning and practicing your home fire escape plan – you never know when you may need to use it. And don't forget, it is something that should be reviewed and practiced at least twice a year.