



## Fire Safety Planning Checklist

Once the smoke alarm sounds, you may only have a few minutes to get to safety outside the house. You need to plan ahead and be prepared before a fire emergency happens.

Some additional planning may be required if your family includes children, older adults, people with special needs, or pets. Be sure to review the accompanying tip sheets for information relating to these specific groups.

Follow these simple steps to make sure your family is prepared to make a safe escape!

**Step 1 - Smoke Alarms: Protect your home and family.** *[See Smoke Alarm Safety Tips for more installation and maintenance tips]*

- ❑ Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.
- ❑ Test smoke alarms once a month by pressing the TEST button.
- ❑ Replace smoke alarm batteries in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps" or "beeps" to indicate low batteries, it should be replaced immediately.
- ❑ Smoke alarms should be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, at least once every ten years.
- ❑ Make sure everyone in your home, including children, know what the fire alarm sounds like and what it means. *[See Fire Safety Tips for Parents/Older Adults/People with Special Needs]*

**Step 2 - Fire Escape Plan: Plan ahead for safety.**

- ❑ Involve all family members, including children, in creating your fire escape plan. *[See Fire Safety Tips for Parents/Older Adults/People with Special Needs]*
- ❑ Walk through your home and note any possible exits, including windows.
- ❑ Make sure that doors and windows leading to the outside can be opened easily by everyone in the family.
- ❑ Draw a floor plan of your house and mark two ways to escape from each room. *[See Fire Safety Tips for Pet Owners]*
- ❑ Consider purchasing an escape ladder if one of the designated escape routes from second or third story rooms will be a window. *[See Escape Ladder Safety Tips]*

## Step 2 - Fire Escape Plan (*Continued*)

- ❑ Assign a responsible family member and a backup person to assist infants, small children, the elderly, and people with mobility issues during fire drills and fire emergencies.
- ❑ Teach older children to escape on their own in case you can't help them.
- ❑ Choose a meeting place a safe distance outside your home where your family will go to gather after escaping from the house. The meeting place should be something permanent and easy to identify like a tree, light pole, or mailbox and should be in a place where it will be easy for the fire fighters to see you.
- ❑ Teach everyone in the family how to call 911 from a neighbor's home or cellular phone once they have safely gotten outside.
- ❑ Check to make sure your house number is easy to see from the street so that emergency personnel will be able to find you. [*See Fire Safety Tips for Guests and Babysitters*]

## Step 3 - Fire Drills: Practice makes perfect.

- ❑ Practice your escape plan by having at least two fire drills every year.
- ❑ One of your drills should occur during the night when your family members are sleeping. [*See Fire Safety Tips for Parents*]
- ❑ Push the smoke alarm TEST button to start the practice fire drill.
- ❑ If someone does not awaken to the sound of the alarm during your fire drill, assign both a family member and backup person to take responsibility for waking that person during fire drills and fire emergencies.
- ❑ Practice using different ways out. Everyone should know at least two ways out of every room.
- ❑ Assigned family members and backup people should practice assisting infants, small children, the elderly, and people with mobility issues according to your fire escape plan.
- ❑ Make sure every member of your family knows where the escape ladders are kept and how to use them if they are part of your plan, but do not practice with the escape ladder during your fire drills. Only use the ladder during a real emergency.
- ❑ Have everyone practice escaping while staying down low near the floor to stay under the smoke.
- ❑ Once out of the house, everyone should go to the designated meeting place.

## Step 4 - In Case of Emergency

- ❑ Use the safest escape route possible. Choose the one with the least amount of smoke and heat.
- ❑ If fire or smoke is blocking your first escape route, change direction and use your second way out.
- ❑ If you must escape through smoke, remember to crawl low, under the smoke. Smoke rises, so the cleanest and coolest air is near the floor.
- ❑ As you make your escape, yell to alert other people to the danger.
- ❑ Close doors behind you as you leave to slow the spread of fire and smoke.
- ❑ Feel closed doors with the back of your hand before opening them. Feel the door, the doorknob and the crack between the door and the frame. Do not open the door if it feels hot.
- ❑ Do not open a closed door if you see smoke coming in around or under the door.
- ❑ Do not stop to call the fire department from inside the house. Once outside, call 911 from a neighbor's house or cellular phone.
- ❑ Do not take any belongings with you as you leave the house.
- ❑ Once you are out of the house - stay out. Go to the designated meeting place and wait for the fire department to arrive.

## Step 5 - Defending in Place

- ❑ If you cannot escape your home because the exits are blocked with smoke or fire, close as many doors as you can between you and the fire.
- ❑ Seal the cracks around and under the door and any vents to the room with wet towels or tape to keep the smoke from coming in.
- ❑ If possible, open a window at the top and bottom to let some fresh air in.
- ❑ Call 911 and tell them exactly where you are.
- ❑ Signal to fire fighters with a flashlight or light-colored fabric.

Visit [www.electrical-safety.org](http://www.electrical-safety.org) to learn more about ESFI and electrical safety.