

Babysitters' Fire Safety Tips

Taking care of children is serious business, and preventing fires and knowing what to do in a fire emergency are part of the job

An Escape Plan

Ask the adults who hired you about the household's plan for escaping a fire. You will find out what they expect you to do, and you will be reminding them to plan ahead for fire emergencies.

- Have them give you a home tour. Learn where all the windows and doors are and make sure you can open them.
- Find two ways out of each room -- especially bedrooms.
- Make sure the family has decided on an outside meeting place where everyone is supposed to go when they have escaped a fire. (So you can count heads and make sure everyone is out.)
- Don't scare the kids, but talk to them about escaping a fire. Find out how much they know, and whatever you do, **don't confuse them by changing their household's escape plans.**

Stay With The Kids

Supervise the children when they are awake and check on them often when they are in bed. Once they are sound asleep, stay close enough to hear them if they wake up.

Basic Precautions

- Do not smoke. Put matches and lighters away -- up high where children can not reach them.
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet (1 meter) away from anything that can burn. (And keep the children away from space heaters, too.)
- If you are allowed to cook, declare a "kid-free zone" 3 feet (1 meter) around the stove or microwave. Turn pot handles in toward the center of the stove so children can't grab them. Never leave the room when you are cooking and keep toys, clothing, paper, and other clutter off the stove.
- Follow the instructions for microwave meals and never put any container in a microwave unless you are positive it is safe. Never microwave anything for longer than the instructions say to. Let foods cooked in microwaves cool, and then open containers carefully. If you are not sure how to use a microwave, don't!

If There Is A Fire

Your first job is to get yourself and the children outside.

- Then stay out.
- Don't go back in for anything. When everyone's arrived at the meeting place, take the children with you to call the fire department from a neighbor's phone or call from a cell phone if you have one.

Give the fire department the exact address of the fire and stay on the phone until they tell you it is okay to hang up. Then call the adults who hired you.

Escape Tips

- If you run into smoke while you are escaping, try another way out. If you can't avoid the smoke, crawl on your hands and knees with your head 1 to 2 feet (30 to 60 centimeters) above the floor.
- Test doors before you open them -- if there is fire on the other side, it will feel warm around the cracks.

- Kneel down, and then reach up as high as you can and touch the door -- at the knob and around the frame -- with the back of your hand.
- If the door's cool, open it with caution. If it is warm, try another escape route.

Information supplied by National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA