

## Escape Planning

# Do you have a plan to get out alive?

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Thousands of Americans die in home fires every year. And while fire drills in schools are a familiar event, conducting drills in the home (where more than 80% of all fires occur) is often forgotten. Join your local fire department and Plan to Get Out Alive! Fill out a fire escape plan with your family and practice your home fire drill.

### Install smoke detectors

Most fire deaths occur at night, often while people are sleeping. Give your family a head start out by installing smoke detectors near each sleeping area and escape route of your home.

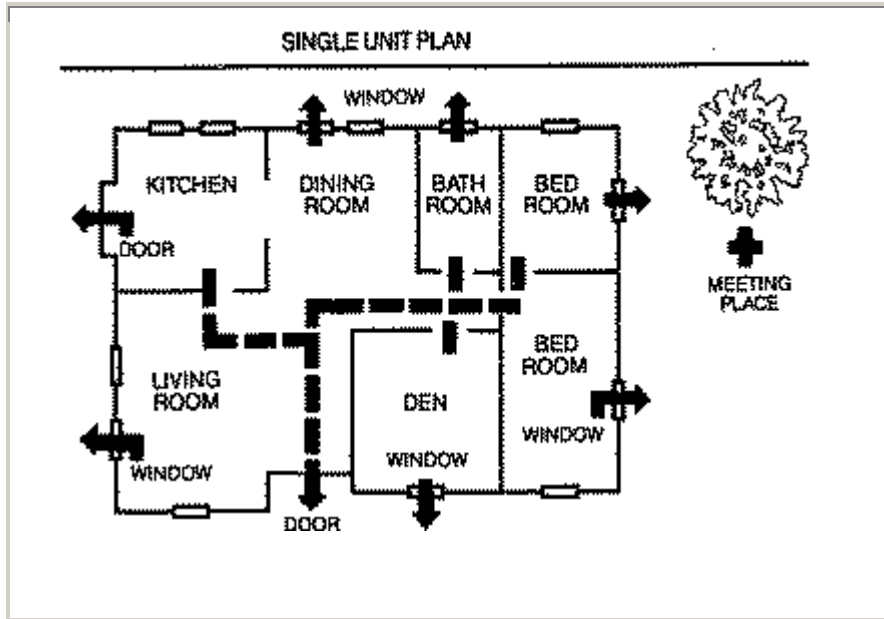
### Install a residential sprinkler system

These low cost fire-extinguishing systems save lives and property!

### Mark escape routes on a floor plan

Draw a floor plan of your entire home. Show all possible exits from each room. Know *two ways* out of every room, especially bedrooms.

- If you live in a multi-story apartment building, map out as many routes as possible to exit stairways on your floor and other floors of the building.
- If one of your escape routes is a second or third story window, consider investing in a safety ladder. Check local hardware or major department stores.
- If you live in a high-rise building, plan to use stairways, *never* elevators to escape fire. Elevators may become trapped between floors or take you directly into the fire.



## Discuss the escape plan with your family

It's important to go over your fire escape plan with your family, or with your landlord and neighbors. Make sure everyone in your family knows the telephone number for the fire department or the local emergency number. Carefully explain the following procedures:

Sleep with your bedroom doors **CLOSED** at night. A closed door will help slow the spread of deadly fire, smoke, and heat. When following your escape route, be sure to close doors behind you.

- The smoke detector will sound the alarm to wake you and your family. You can also develop a special signal that all family members will understand to mean "**danger**." You might use a whistle or bang on the wall. Use this signal **only** in emergencies.
- When you hear the alarm, roll out of bed to the floor. Get down on your hands and knees, crawl to your door and touch it. Don't stop for clothes, papers or jewelry.
- If the door feels cool, open it just a crack to check for smoke. If there is none, leave by your planned escape route. Remember to crawl low and keep your head down. Cleaner air is nearer to the ground.
- If the door feels hot when you touch it, **DO NOT OPEN. DO NOT PANIC. STOP AND THINK BEFORE YOU START.** Escape out the window or use your alternate exit.
- If you can't leave your room or apartment, seal cracks around doors and vents as best you can, using wet towels if possible. Open a window at

both the top and bottom. Stay low by the window to breathe fresh air. If there's a phone, call the fire department - even if it has already been called or is at the scene and tell them exactly where you are in the building. Shout for help and signal your position by waving a bright cloth, towel, or sheet.

- Teach small children never to hide under beds or in closets. Take your children to a neighboring firehouse to see the equipment and protective gear firefighters use, so they won't be frightened of firefighters during the rescue.
- Gather at a pre-determined meeting place outside your home, well away from the building, and take a head count. Once outside, **STAY OUT**. After you've all met, send someone to go to a neighbor's house and phone the fire department. Meet the fire trucks and tell fire fighters whether everyone is out of the house.

## Practice with a Home Fire Drill

Once you've sketched out your escape plan and discussed it with your family and neighbors, **PRACTICE**. Involve every member of the household.

- Start your home fire drill with everyone in their beds, doors closed. One person sounds the alarm. Each person touches his/her door. Pretend the door is cool and practice your escape route from the room. Then, pretend the door is hot and practice the alternate escape. Meet outdoors at the assigned spot. Send one person to pretend to phone the fire department.
- If you live in an apartment building, work with your landlord or building manager and neighbors to map out and practice escape plans. Invite a representative of your local fire department to help out by inspecting the building and advising on fire prevention and escape planning.
- Disabled people have special needs and should have two escape plans - one for when the rest of the family is at home, and one for when they are alone. For more home fire escape tips for the disabled, contact your local fire department.