

# How Fire Safe Is YOUR Home?

Make fire safety a “family business” by involving the entire family in a fire safety inspection. Here’s a comprehensive checklist to use as a guide.

## **Kitchen**

- ✓ Matches stored out of the reach of children
- ✓ No overloaded outlets, worn or frayed extension or appliance cords
- ✓ No curtains or towel racks close to the range
- ✓ Flammable liquids (*cleaning fluids, contact adhesives, etc.*) or aerosols stored away from the range or other heat source (*Remember, even a pilot light can set vapors on fire.*)
- ✓ Don’t store items above the range where someone could get burned reaching for them (especially small children in search of cookies or other goodies)

## **Living Room, Family Room, Den, Bedrooms**

- ✓ No extension cords run under rugs or carpets or looped over nails or other sharp objects that could cause them to fray; Replace or fix overloaded or frayed extension cords
- ✓ Fireplace kept screened and cleaned regularly
- ✓ Use only large ashtrays and empty them frequently when there is no heat or burning left (*Small ashtrays are too dangerous.*)
- ✓ Sufficient air space around TV, stereo and other electronic equipment to avoid overheating
- ✓ Space Heaters kept three feet away from curtains, furniture and papers

## **Basement, Garage, Storage Areas**

- ✓ No newspapers or other rubbish stored near furnace, water heater, or other heat source
- ✓ No oily, greasy rags stored, except when kept in labeled and sealed non-glass containers (*preferably metal*)
- ✓ No gasoline or other flammable liquids stored in the house, basement, or near a workbench or pilot light.
- ✓ No overloaded outlets or extension cords and all electrical fuses should be the correct size

## **Dangerous actions:**

Do you allow unsafe habits? These guidelines may help your family become more safety aware.

- ✓ Wear close-fitting sleeves while cooking. *(No loose sleeves, shirts, blouses or skirts that may catch fire.)*
- ✓ Never leave cooking unattended.
- ✓ Never use gasoline to start a fire in the grill or add lighter fluid to an already-started fire.
- ✓ No smoking while fueling a vehicle or a boat or a gas powered tool like a lawn mower.
- ✓ No smoking in bed, or in a chair or on the sofa when tired, drinking or taking medication.
- ✓ Never spray aerosols while smoking or near a space heater, range or other ignition source.
- ✓ No smoking while using a cleaning fluid, paint thinner or other flammable liquid.
- ✓ Never use a cigarette lighter after spilling flammable fluid on your hands or clothing.
- ✓ Never reach over a range or climb onto a range to get something stored above it.
- ✓ Never lean against a range for warmth or stand too close to a heater or fireplace.
- ✓ Never let a small child to blow out a match.
- ✓ Never use a lighted match, lighter or candle to illuminate a dark area, such as a closet.

## **Safety Measures:** Do you have these safety items in your home?

- ✓ Working smoke detectors on all levels and outside sleeping areas *(each story or wing, basement, etc.)* Have you tested the detector in the last month?
- ✓ ABC or ABCD fire extinguisher in the kitchen and/or workshop?
- ✓ Emergency exit plan, with two ways out from each room and a meeting place outdoors?

# Get Out Now!

## Preparing A Home Fire Escape Plan

You wake up in the middle of the night hearing the constant, loud beeping sound of your smoke detector. You can see smoke all around you. Do you know what to do?

Too often people panic in this situation because they do not know what to do. You and your family should make a fire escape plan to insure that everyone gets out of the house quickly and safely.

- ✓ **Draw a floor plan of your home or apartment.** Be sure to mark all the doors and windows.
- ✓ **Know two ways out of every room.** If one way is blocked by smoke or fire, you can use the second.
- ✓ **Plan a waiting place where everyone will meet.** Plan to call the fire department from a neighbor's house. Don't go back in the house!
- ✓ **If someone is trapped, let the fire department rescue them.**
- ✓ **Practice your exit plan until it becomes automatic.** Then practice again at least twice a year. Too often families make plans and then put them away in a drawer or filing cabinet. When a fire occurs, you will not have time to search for your plan.

When you are in your room and you hear a smoke alarm go off or someone yelling "fire" or "smoke," you only have a few minutes to get out of the house.

- ✓ **Get down on the floor and crawl low.** Both smoke and heat rise, so if you stay between 12 and 36 inches off the floor you will avoid the high heat and toxic fumes.
  - ✓ **Check the door before opening.** Look for smoke coming in around the frame. Feel the door with the back of your hand. If you have a solid door, it will be hot to the touch if there is a fire on the other side.
  - ✓ **Open doors slowly and carefully.** If a door is cool enough to open, you still need to be very cautious. There could still be fire on the other side. When you open the door, put your head down and tilt you face away from the opening. Open just a little, so it will be easy to close if you detect a fire.
  - ✓ **Close doors behind you.** Remember that closed doors will slow the flow of oxygen to the fire and give you added time to escape.
  - ✓ **Learn how to escape from windows.** If you are on the first story exit the window, feet first. Grab on to the ledge and hang down as far as you can and then jump. Do not attempt to exit a window any higher up except as a last resort.
  - ✓ **Do not use an elevator.** If you live in a high-rise, locate the fire escape and use it. A fire can disable the elevator, you could be trapped.
- Use the grid below to make your fire escape plan.
- ✓ **Start off by drawing the outside edges of your house then draw the inside walls, rooms, doors, etc.**
  - ✓ **Once the house is drawn, mark an escape route so that every room has at least two ways to get out in the event of an emergency.**
  - ✓ **Family members should become familiar with this plan and have a central meeting place outside of the home for the family to meet.**
  - ✓ **Make sure that someone is assigned to help younger children and older family members.**
  - ✓ **Practice the plan!!**

**Here is a checklist to review after practicing your escape plan ...**  
**Did you remember to...**

- ✓ Make a floor plan and know two ways out of every room?
- ✓ Respond quickly and calmly?
- ✓ Stay low and crawl?
- ✓ Feel the doors to see if they are hot?
- ✓ Open doors slowly and carefully?
- ✓ Close doors behind you?
- ✓ Exit windows by dropping feet first?
- ✓ Go immediately to a meeting place?

# Is Your Smoke Detector Protecting You?

- ✓ **A working smoke detector can triple your chances of surviving a fire.**
- ✓ **A clean, properly installed smoke detector can give you valuable minutes of early warning in an emergency.**

## Smoke rises

Place your smoke detector on or near the ceiling. Make sure you place your detector at least three feet away from any air vents so smoke doesn't get blown away before the detector can sense it.

## Check your batteries

Test your detector once a month, and replace your batteries once a year. To test most detectors, you either push a button or shine a light. It may be helpful to connect this with a regular event such as payday. Pick an annual event, like New Year's Day or daylight savings time, to replace your batteries - even if they still work. Never disconnect your smoke detector or "borrow" the batteries for something else.

Again, follow the manufacturer's directions. If your detector "chirps" it's probably time to replace the batteries. If you rent, ask your landlord how to check the batteries and maintain the detector when you move in.

## Put at least one detector in each sleeping area

One detector per sleeping area is the absolute minimum. If all the bedrooms in your home share a single hallway, place the smoke detector in the hall outside the rooms. You should have an additional detector outside every bedroom that doesn't share a common hallway. If you sleep with the door closed, put another detector inside the bedroom. On floors without bedrooms, place detectors in or near living areas.

A good place for a smoke detector in a two-story house is at the top of the stairs since smoke from downstairs will rise along that path. Follow the manufacturer's directions. The instructions will show you exactly where and how to install your smoke detector.

## Keep it clean

When you clean your home, remember your detector. Smoke detectors work by sensing very small smoke particles in the air. They can't detect the particles if the chambers are clogged with dust, or if they've been painted over. A once-a-week dusting or vacuuming will help to keep the detector's chambers clear.

## **Practice escape routes**

A smoke detector can give you enough time to get out. If you have young children or if you live with someone who needs assistance, discuss plans to help them get out. Practice and discuss fire safety with your family. A smoke detector won't prevent a fire, but it can give you an extra few minutes in an emergency that could save your family's lives. Use the time to get out of your house and gather your family in a safe, central location.