HOMe FIRE FACTS you SHOULD KNOW

Most multiple death fires start during nighttime sleep hours when family members are least prepared.

In any fire—seconds count! An early warning smoke detector system in your home can give you the added seconds that could save lives.

Heat rises! Blinding and choking smoke, lung-scourching heat of up to 1,000 degrees F, and poisonous fumes can race ahead of actual flames and quickly block hallway and stairway escape routes. These normal exit routes can quickly become death traps when bedroom doors are opened for escape.

In a desperate night fire emergency your family will not get a second chance. Everyone must act quickly, correctly, and automatically.

IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE

In a panic situation, family members don't always stop to think clearly. They often act without purpose and in ways harmful to themselves and others. One wrong move can mean a family disaster.

Practicing fire escape from all possible exits will help to prevent panic. Practice can teach the skills needed to remove screens, operate locks, and climb down rope ladders quickly. Practice gives both muscle and brain a clearer path to follow when quick reaction is needed.

Practice can also point out windows that stick, locks that may be hard to operate in the dark, and escape routes that need modification to be effective.

PLAN TWO EXITS FROM EVERY ROOM

Involve the whole family in a discussion of an escape plan. Draw a diagram of the house or apartment and map out two separate escape routes from every room (space is provided on page 2). Pay special attention to bedrooms.

Halls, stairways, and doors may be the first exit routes, but be prepared for these routes to be blocked by heat and smoke. Test all doors along the primary escape route as intense heat may be on the other side. Are door panels hot? Is smoke leaking in? If you suspect fire on the other side, don't open the door. If you think it's safe, brace your shoulder against the door, keep your head away from the opening, and open the door slightly—being prepared to slam it shut if any heat or smoke rushes in.

Your best alternate escape route might be through a window, perhaps one that opens onto a garage or porch roof. Even if you can't get to the ground from there, you can usually wait safely in the fresh air for rescue. If other methods are not feasible, more able family members can be assigned the job of setting up a nearby ladder to help others escape.

Consideration may also be given to providing rope ladders, escape poles, or decorative sturdy trellises as means of escape from upper windows and porch roofs. A knotted rope might also be alright for athletic youngsters.

Decide who will help young children and elderly or infirm members of the family. Plan where you will meet after the escape, so no one will risk going back inside for someone who is already safe.

Emphasize that if a fire is discovered, first, alert everyone so they can begin their escape. Second, get out quickly. Do not take time to take anything with you. Third, call the fire department—do not use your own phone. Lastly, fight the fire (if you can do it safely) with appropriate extinguishing equipment.

ESCAPE ROUTE PLAN

STEP 1: BASIC FLOOR LAYOUT

1. Make an outline of entire floor area of your home on the next page. Dimensions and details need not be exact.

2. Label each room.

3. Locate windows, doors and stairway exits from each room. If upper floor, shade in any rooftops that could be used as a fire escape.

STEP 2: ROOM INSPECTION

1. Go to each bedroom. Select the best window for an emergency escape.
2. Test the window to see that it works easily.
3. Decide how family members will reach the ground from the escape window. Purchase and install necessary materials.

STEP 3: COMPLETE "ESCAPE PLAN"

1. Draw black arrows from each room to show normal exit through hall or stairway.
2. Draw red arrows from each room to show emergency exit in case fire blocks normal exit through doors, hallway or stairs.
3. Post completed escape plan where all can see as a continuous reminder.
CONDUCT A FIRE ESCAPE DRILL...

Your home fire drill should not be scary. Make it a game for young children. In an emergency they will follow directions without fear. To be more realistic, pick a time when it is dark if possible.

DRILL BEGINS...

A. Everyone is in his bedroom -- doors closed.
B. Sound an alarm...FIRE!...FIRE!
C. Everyone swings into action -- out of bed -- crawl to the door. BEFORE OPENING THE DOOR, CAREFULLY TEST IT. INTENSE HEAT AND SMOKE MAY BE ON THE OTHER SIDE...ONE BREATH COULD KILL YOU.

HOW TO "TEST" A DOOR: Door panels hot? Smoke leaking in? If you suspect fire on other side, DON'T OPEN THE DOOR. But if you think it is safe, open it cautiously.

HOW TO "OPEN" A DOOR: Brace shoulder against door. Keep head to one side. Open door slightly...ready to slam it if any heat or smoke rushes in.

First Drill: Escape through normal exit (hall or stairway).

Second Drill: Imagine doors are hot -- hall is blocked by fire!

NOW, everyone must test his emergency escape exit. Pretend that you are caught in smoke and heat. Keep low -- take short breaths, because heat rises and air is better closer to the floor. Depending on age and capability, you need not actually go out windows. But, be sure everyone can open windows and screens easily, position an emergency escape ladder quickly, etc.

D. Be prepared to carry out any duty assignments:
- Notify fire department (know procedure).
- Provide special help for infants, elders, or second floor occupants, such as raising an outside ladder that is kept nearby.

E. Everyone gather at outside meeting spot. All accounted for? Elapsed time from alarm signal?

FIRE ESCAPE INFORMATION

How to sound family fire alarm

Outside meeting place

Special Assignment

notifies fire department using neighbor's phone.

Fire Department phone number

Special Duties (helping others escape, firefighting, etc):

Phone Numbers: Hospital
Ambulance
Doctor

FIRE DRILLS (Every Six Months)

Date

Date

Date

Date

Date

Date

OTHER EXTENSION PUBLICATIONS ABOUT FIRE:

Parents: Don't Let Your Children Burn, L-1495
Home Fire Detectors Save Lives, L-2120
The place to go when you need to know . . .

...about agriculture, home economics, 4-H and youth or community resource development. Drop by or call your county Extension office. You'll find friendly, well-trained agents ready to serve you with up-to-date information, advice and publications. Your county Extension office...the place to go when you need to know!

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