

## Home Escape Plans

In an emergency situation, things can become chaotic in an instant. Creating and practicing an evacuation plan ensures that everyone in the home knows what to do in the event of an emergency. This simple measure can reduce your risk of injury or death in case of a home fire.

### Alarm

An integral part of the home escape plan is the alert system. Most home fire fatalities occur at night. Installing smoke detectors in every room where people sleep and at least one on every floor is vital. The alarm alerts you to the danger and lets you begin your evacuation plan.

### Escape Route

Each room must have two exits in case one is blocked by fire. In bedrooms, this usually includes the door and a window. Make sure windows are not blocked and open easily. If there are security bars on the window, make sure they have an emergency quick release device. If you have a two story house, consider keeping emergency evacuation ladders in each room where people sleep.

### Stay low and go

Smoke is the number one killer in home fires. It is important that all family members know the importance of staying low to avoid smoke inhalation. Teach children to feel doors with the back of their hands. If the door is hot, use the other exit from the room. If someone is trapped, practice sealing yourself in for safety. Close doors between yourself and the smoke and stuff towels or clothes in the cracks to keep smoke out. If there is a phone in the room dial 911 and tell them your location. Stay by the window for fresh air and to signal rescuers. Use a flashlight, sheet, towel or shirt to signal rescuers.

### Establish a meeting place

Once outside, each family member should head to the designated meeting place. This should be far enough away from the home to be safe. One family member should go to the neighbors to dial 911. If any family members are not accounted for, do not go back inside to rescue them, wait for first responders. When they arrive, let them know the possible location of anyone trapped inside.

### Assistance

Many people in the home may not be able to evacuate on their own including infants, the elderly and people with disabilities. It is important to have someone who is assigned to assist that family member in their escape. Young children may become frightened in an emergency and hide from first responders. Practicing your escape plan and discussing the importance of being visible will help avoid this.

### E.D.I.T.H. (Exit Drills in the Home)

An important first step when creating an escape plan is to create and label a floor plan of your house and mark the escape routes. You will see plans like these by the doors in public buildings and schools. Review your escape plan with everyone in the house and post it where everyone can see. Practice your exit drill at least twice a year.

After you have drafted your escape plan, make sure each member of the family knows what to do. The exit drill should not be a surprise and is not meant to scare or alarm anyone, especially children. You should not practice potentially dangerous drills like second story window evacuations. Make sure to keep practice evacuation people who will need assistance evacuating.