

## Home Fire Safety

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, the United States has one of the highest fire death rates in the industrialized world. Each year, fire kills more Americans than all other natural disasters combined and at least 80 percent of all fire deaths occur in residences. The following are preventive tips for you and your family and ways to stay safe if a fire occurs.

### Prevention Tips

- Cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the United States, many resulting from unattended cooking or human error.
- If you smoke, consider smolder-resistant bedding and upholstered furniture, which act as significant fire deterrents.
- Don't overload circuits or extension cords. Immediately shut off and unplug appliances that sputter, spark or emit an unusual smell.
- Wood stoves should sit on a non-combustible surface. Fireplaces should have non-combustible materials around the opening and hearth. Space heaters should be placed on a firm surface at least three feet away from combustible items.
- Gasoline and other flammable liquids should never be used to start a wood fire as they might cause it to explode or flare up.
- Inspect and clean chimneys and vents annually.
- Consider fire-safe landscaping for your property by creating a defensible space between your home and flammable vegetation.

### Escape Safely

- One of the single most important ways you can protect your family is by having a working smoke detector on every floor of your house.

- In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can grow into a major fire. An average house can fill with thick black smoke in only minutes. Escape first, then call for help.
- Develop a home fire escape plan. Practice it with your children and designate a meeting place outside.
- Never open doors that are hot. Establish two different ways to get out of each room.
- Practice how to open locked or barred doors and windows. Make sure that security bars on your windows and doors have a quick-release device so you can open them immediately.
- Always crawl low under smoke and try to keep your mouth covered. Even small amounts of smoke and toxic gases can make you drowsy, disoriented and short of breath.
- Familiarize your children with the sound of your smoke alarm and teach them not to hide from firefighters.
- Test each smoke alarm every month and replace the batteries at least once a year. Replace smoke alarms every 10 years or as recommended by the manufacturer.



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