
If a Fire Occurs

- If you are in a burning home or building, implement your escape plan immediately. Get out as quickly and as safely as possible. The less time you are exposed to poisonous gases, the safer you will be.
- Use stairs or a fire escape. Do not use an elevator. Stay calm. Take responsibility. Go meet your family at your outside meeting place.
- If you are escaping through a closed door, feel the door with the back of your hand before opening the door. If it is cool and there is no smoke at the bottom or top, open the door slowly. If you see smoke or fire beyond the door, close it and use your second way out. If the door is warm, use your second way out. It is a natural tendency to automatically use the door, but fire may be right outside. Feeling the door will warn you of possible danger.
- If you see smoke or fire in your first escape route, use your second way out. The less time you are exposed to poisonous gases or flames, the safer you will be.
- If you must exit through smoke, crawl low under the smoke to your exit. Fires produce many poisonous gases. Some are heavy and will sink low to the floor; others will rise carrying soot towards the ceiling. Crawling with your head at a level of one to two feet above the ground will provide the best air.
- Close doors behind you as you escape to delay the spread of the fire.
- If smoke, heat, or flames block your exit routes and you cannot get outside safely, stay in the room with the door closed. Open the window for ventilation and hang a sheet outside the window so firefighters can find you. Wait by the window for help. The first thing firefighters will do when they arrive at a fire is check for trapped persons. Hanging a sheet out lets them know where to find you. If there is a phone in the room, call 9-1-1 or your local emergency services number and tell the operator your situation and location.
- Once you are out, stay out!
- If someone is still inside, direct the firefighters to that person's probable location. You may also tell them about any pets that may still be inside. Firefighters are trained and equipped to enter burning buildings, you are not.
- Get out first, away from toxic smoke and gases, then call 9-1-1 or your local emergency services number. Use your neighbor's phone, a cell phone, or pay phone to call for help.
- Give first aid where needed after calling 9-1-1 or your local emergency services number. People who are seriously injured or burned should be transported to professional medical help immediately.
- Stay out of fire-damaged homes until local fire authorities say it is safe to re-enter. Fire may have caused damage that could injure you or your family. There may be residual smoke or gases that are unsafe to breathe.
- Look for structural damage. Fire authorities may allow you to re-enter, but may not have completed a thorough inspection. Look for damage that will need repair.
- Check that all wiring and utilities are safe. Fire may cause damage to inside walls and to utility lines not normally visible.

- Discard food that has been exposed to heat, smoke, or soot. The high temperatures of a fire and its by-products can make food unsafe.
- Contact your insurance agent. Take inventory before you discard damaged goods. Save receipts for money you spend relating to fire loss. Your insurance agent may provide immediate help with living expenses until you are able to return home and may also offer assistance for repairs.
- Remember that there are many resources to help you cope with your feelings after a fire. You may feel sadness, fear, and anxiety because of burns and injuries, loss of your personal belongings, and/or damage to your home. Explore your feelings about what has happened.
- Work with your family to make a plan to replace belongings lost to fire and smoke.
- Talk with your family, friends, a minister, or school counselor about how to go on with your daily life, how to deal with your losses and/or injuries, and any other concerns you have.
- Investigate resources in your community that will help you return your life and your home to normal: your Red Cross chapter, other community disaster agencies, religious institutions, commercial businesses, and contractors, such as smoke-removal companies.

Important Information to Emphasize With Children

- Practice stop, drop, and roll. If your clothes catch on fire, know how to stop, drop, and roll. Stop what you are doing, drop to the ground, cover your face, and roll back and forth until the flames go out. **DO NOT RUN**—running makes the fire burn faster. (Note: Children tend to confuse this message with the “crawl low and go” message about how to exit a burning building. Make sure they understand that “stop, drop, and roll” is to be used only when clothing catches on fire.)
- Practice “crawl low and go.” If you must escape through smoke, crawl low, under the smoke. Fires produce many poisonous gases. Some are heavy and will sink low to the floor; others will rise, carrying soot toward the ceiling.
- Crawling with your head at a level of one to two feet above the ground will provide the best air. Close doors behind you.
- Practice getting out as safely and quickly as you can. The less time you are exposed to poisonous gases, heat, or flames, the safer you will be.
- Practice going to your family meeting place and then choosing one person to call 9-1-1 or your local emergency services number. Gathering in a specific location right outside your home will quickly let you know who is outside and allow you to tell firefighters who is still inside and their probable location.
- Memorize the number to call in a fire or other emergency (9-1-1 or your local emergency services number).
- Remember, in a real fire, once you are out, stay out.
- It is a firefighter’s job to rescue people and pets, not your job. (Note: Often, children are concerned about the safety of their pets, so discuss this issue before a fire starts. In many cases, pets are able to get out on their own. Only trained

firefighters, who have proper breathing apparatus and protective clothing, should go into a burning or smoky building.)

- Firefighters are our friends, and they will help in case of a fire. (Note: A firefighter wearing full protective gear can look frightening, and, if children do not know who is under all that equipment, they may try to hide from a firefighter during a fire. A visit to a fire station can help ease children's fears.)

Attribution: Fire safety content above derived from *Talking About Disasters: Guide for Standard Messages*, produced by the National Disaster Education Coalition, Washington, D.C. The specific contributors of fire safety information include the American Red Cross, National Fire Protection Association, U.S. Fire Administration, and U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.