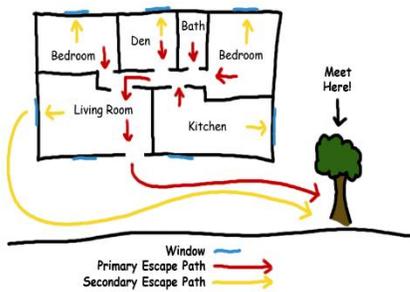


Escaping a House Fire



Escape from a fire first and then dial 911



Have an escape plan and practice it. Prepare for the worst by developing a fire escape plan and making sure everyone in your household knows what to do in case of a fire. Your plan should identify all available exits from each room and routes that lead from the room to a safe, open-air space. Designate a meeting space away from your house, such as a neighbor's yard or a mailbox across the street.

- It's important that your exit routes do not lead to a closed-in area that would prevent escape away from your home, like a gated courtyard. It's best that any gates or fences can be easily unlocked or unlatched from inside.
- Make sure everyone in your household knows how to unlock or unlatch any doors, windows, gates, or fences. Routinely inspect any and all these potential obstacles to be sure they will provide a means of escape in the event of a fire.
- Practice your plan every few months, including at night, which is when fires are most deadly since it's more difficult to find a safe exit.
- Pick an outdoor meeting place that is in view of the front door and at a safe distance from your home. Family members should know to head for the spot immediately.
- Never go back inside for any reason.





Plan around the abilities of everyone in your household. When making an escape plan, take any handicaps or abilities into account. If you or someone in your household depends on glasses or hearing aids and will need them in order to find their way out, make sure they're always on a nightstand or other handy spot. Make sure wheelchairs, canes, and other means of mobility assistance are by their user's bed or easily accessible.



- It's best for anyone with mobility issues to sleep on the ground level of a multi-story home
- An elderly person or disabled person should have a telephone in their room.
- Smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or flashing light are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- For added safety, interconnect the smoke alarms. If one sounds, they all sound. This gives more time to escape.



- **Have a plan for young children who cannot get outside by themselves.** You will need to wake babies and very young children and help them get out. In your plan, talk about who will help each child get out safely.



Stay low and crawl to an exit to avoid smoke inhalation. Stay as low to the ground as possible while you swiftly make your way to the nearest exit, especially if there is smoke in the area you're located. Smoke inhalation can cause you to lose consciousness, and the freshest air will be closest to the ground since smoke and toxic chemicals rise. In addition, staying low below smoke will increase your ability to clearly see your escape path.



Feel doorknobs to see if they're hot. Never open a door if the doorknob feels hot. That means there's most likely a fire behind it and opening the door will put you in danger and fuel the fire with oxygen. If your primary means of escape is blocked by a hot doorknob or other obvious sign of fire, find an alternate route or a window.



- Use the back of your hand to feel doorknobs, rather than your palm. The thinner skin on the back of your hand is more sensitive to heat, so you'll notice heat before getting burned.
- Open any doors you come across slowly and be prepared to quickly shut it in case you encounter fire or smoke.



Don't hide in the event of a fire. Even if you're scared, it's most important never to hide under a bed, in the closet, or anywhere else during a fire. If you hide during a fire, firefighters or other responders won't know where you are. Try not to panic and do your best to remain calm and make your way to the nearest way out of your house.



Know what to do if your escape routes are blocked. If all possible exits are blocked, it's important that you do everything you can to let any emergency responders know where you are. If you have a phone handy, **call 911** to let them know your exact location. Yell for help, shine a flashlight at a window, or find a light-colored cloth or clothing item to signal out the window.



- If you are stuck in a room, cover all vents, close the door and put a towel, clothes, or anything on hand that can suitably cover any cracks around it. This will help keep smoke from entering the room.

