

Protect Yourself From Fire



Home is a place where you should feel safe. But your risk of dying in a fire is greatest in your own home.

Would you know what to do if a fire started in your home? Would you have a good chance of surviving?

Most fire deaths occur at home. Thousands of people die from home fires every year in the U.S. and many more are injured. In fact, fires and burns are the third leading cause of home injury deaths in the U.S.

The good news is you can protect yourself from fires in your home. You can prepare to get out safely if there is a fire. Best of all, you can act to prevent a fire from starting.

This guide provides some basic fire safety tips. The information was provided by the Home Safety Council.

Keys to Fire Safety

These are the most important points to remember when it comes to your fire safety:

Smoke can kill. People often assume that most fire deaths are due to flames. In fact, most fire deaths are caused by smoke and poison gases.

Smoke and poison gases are fast, silent killers. They are very hot. They creep up on you quickly. If you breathe them in, you may pass out before you can escape the fire.

Smoke alarms can save your life. Every home should have working smoke alarms on each level. They cut your chances of dying in half if you have a fire. They alert family members throughout your home when smoke begins to spread.

You have to install and maintain smoke alarms so they work right. Smoke alarms are an easy and cheap way to protect against fire. But buying smoke alarms isn't enough. You have to install

them the right way. You have to make sure they keep working. The next page of this safety guide will tell you how.

You should create and practice a fire escape plan. Suppose your smoke alarms go off. Family members need to know how to escape quickly and where to meet outside. Your family should practice your plan. That will help everyone act quickly and correctly in a real fire.

Learn what to do in a real fire. Usually your most important task is to get outside as fast as you can. If you live in a high-rise building, follow your building's escape plan.

You can prevent a fire. Cooking and smoking cause many home fires. Space heaters and candles also pose special dangers. By controlling all sources of heat and fire and checking your home for dangers, you can prevent common types of household fires.



Smoke Can Kill

Many people are afraid of fire. They worry about hot flames, but they don't think about the quiet killers: the smoke and poison gases that cause most fire deaths.

Fires make smoke. A fire doesn't only produce flames. It also makes lots of thick, black smoke. The smoke has poisons in it.

Smoke is dark. The flames of a fire are bright. But the smoke from the fire is very dark. You might not be able to see anything through the smoke.

Smoke is fast. A small flame can turn into a major fire in seconds. It takes only minutes for thick, black, hot smoke to fill a home. Smoke rises quickly from floor to ceiling and moves from room to room.

Smoke is silent. You won't hear smoke. Smoke moves quietly. It won't wake you if you're sleeping.

Smoke is sneaky. Smoke and poison gases spread easily throughout a home. They can slip through vents and door cracks. Breathing in the smoke and fumes can make you drowsy. Even a small amount can put you in a deeper sleep or knock you out if you're awake. Then you could not get out without being rescued.

Heat Can Kill Too

The heat from a fire is another quiet threat.

Heat rises. In a fire, the room temperature increases quickly as the fire grows and spreads. At first, the air is cooler at floor level. At eye level, the heat can reach 600 degrees.

Heat burns. Breathing in the hot smoke and surrounding air will burn your lungs. The heat can melt clothes to your skin. Stay low to the floor, below smoke and high heat, as you escape.

Heat causes flames. In only a few minutes, a room can get so hot that everything inside it bursts into flames. This is called flashover.