

Home Fire Safety

Here are some things you can do to keep you and your family safe at home.

- Install and maintain an adequate number of smoke detectors in the home. One isn't enough unless you live in a one room apartment.

Put a detector in each sleeping room, bedroom hallways, the kitchen, the garage, and at least one on every level of your home.

Change the batteries at least twice a year. A good way to remember is to change batteries when Daylight Savings Time changes - once in the spring and once in the fall.

Test the detectors often.

- Plan two escape routes for every sleeping room in your house.

If fire strikes, your normal method of egress may be blocked by smoke or fire. Make certain that bedroom windows can be opened easily. If the room is on the second floor, consider purchasing a roll-up emergency escape ladder and keep it near the window. If possible, handicapped or elderly persons should sleep on the lower floor and as near to an exit as possible.

- If you smell smoke, drop to the floor and crawl to the exit.

The temperature near the floor may be nearly normal while the temperature at head level can be over 300 degrees. Floor level may also be less smoky.

- Decide in advance where family members will meet outside.

Pick an easy to remember landmark well away from the house. A nearby fire hydrant is usually not a good place since that's where the fire truck will most likely go to first. We don't want someone to get hit by a 20,000 pound fire engine!

- Be safe with electricity.

A high percentage of home fires are caused by faulty wiring, bypassed fuses, and overloaded circuits and extension cords.

Have an electrician check your wiring. Install ground fault breakers or outlets on all outside receptacles, all bathroom and kitchen outlets, all outlets in a room with a concrete floor (such as the garage), and any other outlet where water is, or can be nearby. Doing so will minimize your chances of death from heart arrhythmia or cardiac arrest due to electrocution.

- Maintain and Inspect Open Flame or Heat Generating Appliances

In addition to house wiring, heat generating appliances like furnaces, dryers, hot water heaters, and fireplaces account for most home fires.

Have a professional inspect and clean your furnace and flu at the beginning of each heating season.

Keep flammables away from the combustion chambers on any gas furnaces, gas hot water heaters as well as away from fireplace openings. Never operate a gas appliance without having all protective covers in place.

Keep the clothes drier free from lint buildup and never leave the house while the dryer is running.

- Vapors from solvents like gasoline are heavier than air.

They can travel along the floor to an open flame such as a pilot light. Many homes have burned down because the owner was cleaning parts in gasoline in a closed garage where a gas water heater was present.