

E.D.I.T.H. (Exit Drill In The Home)

In 1995, 3640 Americans died in home fires. that's roughly 10 people a day. Tens of thousands more were injured. People can survive even major fires in their homes if they are alerted to the fire and get out quickly and stay out.

How To Survive

- Install smoke detectors and keep them in working order.
- Make an escape plan and practice it.
- Consider installing an automatic fire-sprinkler system.

Plan Your Escape

Once a fire has started, there's no time to plan how to get out. Sit down with your family today, and make a step-by-step plan for escaping a fire.

- **Draw a floor plan of your home**, marking two ways out of every room – especially sleeping areas. Discuss the escape routes with every member of your household.
- **Agree on a meeting place** where every member of the household will gather outside your home after escaping a fire to wait for the fire department. This allows you to count heads and inform the fire department if anyone is missing or trapped inside the burning building.
- **Practice your escape plan** at least twice a year. Have a fire drill in your home.
- Appoint someone to be the monitor, and have everyone participate. A fire drill is not a race. Get out quickly, but carefully.

Make your Exit Drill Realistic

Pretend that some exits are blocked by fire, and practice alternative escape routes. Pretend that the lights are out and that some escape routes are filling with smoke.

Be Prepared

Make sure everyone in the household can unlock all doors and windows quickly, even in the dark. Windows or doors with security bars need to be equipped with quick-release devices, and everyone in the household should know how to use them.

- **If you live in an apartment building**, use stairways to escape. Never use an elevator during a fire. It may stop between floors or take you to a floor where the fire is burning. Some high-rise buildings may have evacuation plans that require you to stay where you are and wait for the fire department.
- **If you live in a multi-story house** and you must escape from an upper story window, be sure there is a safe way to reach the ground, such as a fire-resistant escape ladder. Make special arrangements for children, older adults, and people with disabilities. People who have difficulty moving should have a phone in their sleeping area and, if possible, should sleep on the ground floor.
- **Test doors before opening them.** While kneeling or crouching at the door, reach up as high as you can and with the back of your hand touch the door, the knob, and the crack between the door and its frame. If you feel any warmth at all, use another escape route. If the door feels cool, open it with caution. Put your shoulder against the door and open it slowly. Be prepared to slam it shut if there is smoke or flames on the other side.
- **If you are trapped**, close all doors between you and the fire. Stuff the cracks around the doors to keep out smoke, Wait at a window and signal for help with a flashlight or by waving a light-colored cloth. If there's a [phone in the room, call the fire department and report exactly where you are.

Get Out Fast...

- **In case of a fire, don't stop for anything.** Do not try and rescue possessions or pets. Go directly to your meeting place, and then call the fire department from a neighbor's phone, a portable phone, or an alarm box. Every member of your household should know how to call the fire department.
- **Crawl low under smoke.** Smoke contains deadly gases, and heat rises. During a fire, cleaner air will be near the floor. If you encounter smoke when using your primary exit, use an alternative escape route. If you must exit through smoke, crawl on your hands and knees, keeping your head 12 to 24 inches (30 to 60 centimeters) above the floor.

...and Stay Out

- **Once you are out of your home**, don't go back for any reason. If people are trapped, the firefighters have the best chance of rescuing them. The heat and smoke of a fire are overpowering. Firefighters have the training, experience, and protective equipment needed to enter burning buildings.

Play It Safe

- **Smoke detectors.** More than half of all fatal home fires happen at night when people are asleep. Smoke detectors sound an alarm when a fire starts, waking people before they are trapped or overcome by smoke. With smoke detectors, your risk of dying in a home fire is cut nearly in half.
- **Install smoke detectors** outside every sleeping area and on every level of your home, including the basement. Follow installation instructions carefully, and test smoke detectors monthly. Change all smoke detector batteries at least once a year. If your detector is more than 10 years old, replace it with a new one.
- **Automatic fire-sprinkler systems.** These systems attack a fire in its early stages by spraying water only on the area where the fire has begun. Consider including sprinkler systems in plans for new construction and installing them in existing homes.

This information is provided by the National Fire Protection Association.