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Make house fire escape plan, then practice it

A recent house fire in Farmington Hills where eight occupants escaped safely reinforces the importance of having a family escape plan.

But while it's very important to have a plan in place, it's equally important to practice it with every occupant of the home. Preparation can make the difference between life and death if there is a fire in your home.

Make a home escape plan.

- Find all the doors and windows that lead outside and make sure they open easily.
- Know two ways out of every room, if possible.
- Have a plan for anyone who may need assistance in your home.
- Select an outdoor place to meet once everyone is outside.
- Practice your plan at least twice a year.

Make sure everyone in the home knows:

- The sound of your smoke alarms.
- The quickest way to leave in an emergency from anywhere in your home.
- The second way out in case the primary exit is blocked.
- How to unlock all doors and windows.
- How to dial 9-1-1 for an emergency.
- Where to go once safely outside.

Make sure that everyone in the home can hear your smoke alarms while in their bedrooms, with the doors closed! It is highly recommended that everyone sleep with the bedroom doors closed since this will provide additional time for a safe escape in the event of a fire. Leaving doors open allows toxic smoke to enter a room, possibly leaving you unconscious or dead. Most fatalities are caused when victims are overcome by smoke, not from being burned.

If there are older adults or people with disabilities living in your home, include them and their specific needs in your planning. The same should be taken into consideration for young children and infants.

Start your escape drill by pressing your alarm while everyone is in their bedroom. Stay low and crawl to the door. Feel doors before opening them. Don't hide or panic. Move fast and get out! If possible, close doors behind you and go to your meeting place once you are outside. NEVER go back inside for any reason. Call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's house or from a cell phone.

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Discuss your drill with everyone involved. What went right? What went wrong? Can it be improved?

An educated family who has practiced their escape plan has a very good chance of surviving a fire should they ever have the misfortune of experiencing one.

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