

Nearly 3400 people died in residential fires in the United States in 2002. In nearly two-thirds of these fires, smoke alarms were either missing or not working properly. Regardless of the cause of fires, everyone needs to know how to respond in case of fire:

- \* Install a smoke alarm on every floor of your home. Check the batteries once a month, and change the batteries at least twice a year.
- \* Keep fire extinguishers where they are most likely to be needed and keep matches out of children's reach.
- \* Always keep space heaters away from curtains and other flammable materials.
- \* Install guards around fireplaces, radiators, pipes and wood-burning stoves.
- \* Plan and practice a fire escape route with your family or roommates.
  - o Gather everyone together at a convenient time.
  - o Sketch a floor plan of all rooms, including doors, windows and hallways. include all floors of the home.
    - + Plan and draw the escape plan with arrows showing two ways, if possible, to get out of each room. Sleeping areas are most important, since many fires happen at night.
    - + Plan to use stairs only, never an elevator.
    - + Plan where everyone will meet after leaving the building.
    - + Designate who should call the fire department and from which phone.
    - + Plan to leave the burning building first and then call from a phone nearby, if possible.
- \* Remember and use the following guidelines to escape from fire:
  - o If smoke is present, crawl low to escape. Because smoke rises in a fire, breathable air is often close to the floor.
  - o Make sure children can open windows, go down a ladder and lower themselves to the ground.
  - o Practice with them. Always lower children to the ground first before you go out a window.
  - o Get out quickly and do not, under any circumstances, return to a burning building.
  - o If you cannot escape, stay in the room and stuff door cracks and vents with wet towels, rags or clothing.
    - + If a phone is available, call the fire department—even if rescuers are already outside—and tell the call taker your location.
- \* Contact your local fire department for additional safety guidelines.

Source: [American Red Cross Health and Safety Services](#)