



Home Fires

In the event of a fire, remember that every second counts, so you and your family must always be prepared. Escape plans help you get out of your home quickly. In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for a house to fill with thick black smoke and become engulfed in flames.

How to Prepare for a Home Fire

- **Stay informed** about types of home fires and fire prevention. The U.S. Fire Administration in partnership with FEMA offers a wealth of information on fire types and fire prevention. Visit <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/>.
- **Make a plan**
 - » Prepare and **practice** a fire escape plan twice a year with everyone in your household, including children and people with disabilities. It's also a good idea to practice your plan with overnight guests.
 - » Draw a map of each level of your home and show all doors and windows. These maps can also aid first responders in quickly identifying locations where people or pets may be trapped.
 - » Find two ways to get out of each room and discuss with your children. Make sure all doors and windows that lead outside open easily.
 - » Only purchase collapsible escape ladders evaluated by a recognized testing laboratory. Use the ladder only in a real emergency.
- » Teach children how to escape on their own in case you cannot help them.
- » Have a plan for everyone in your home who has a disability.
- » Practice your fire escape plan at night and during the daytime.
- » Teach children not to hide from firefighters.
- » Designate a meeting location outside and away from your house, and ensure that every family member knows where to go.
- **Take precautions**
 - » Ensure that your house number can be seen from the street, both day and night.
 - » Conduct a fire safety walkthrough of your home on a regular basis.
 - » Keep clothes, blankets, curtains, towels, and other items that can easily catch on fire at least three feet from space heaters and away from stove burners.
 - » Place space heaters where they will not tip over easily.
 - » Have chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a professional.
- » Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces and leave glass doors open while burning a fire.
- » Never leave cooking unattended.
- » Be sure your stove and small appliances are off before going to bed.
- » Check for worn wires and do not run cords under rugs or furniture.
- » Never overload electrical sockets.
- » Keep lighters and matches out of the reach of children.
- » Never leave cigarettes unattended and never smoke in bed.
- » Make sure cigarettes and ashes are out. The cigarette needs to be completely stubbed out in the ashtray or run under water.
- **Build a kit**—with copies of important documents, like insurance policies, birth and marriage certificates; cash, and enough supplies to meet the needs of each of your family members.

Set your own course through any hazard: stay informed, make a plan, build a kit. Live Ready Marine Corps.



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What to Do if There Is a Home Fire

- **Immediately Leave the Home.**
 - » Get out fast through the safest exit route; you may only have seconds to escape safely.
 - » If you must escape through smoke, remember to crawl low, under the smoke and keep your mouth covered. The smoke contains toxic gases, which can disorient you, cause dizziness, or cause you to pass out.
- Never open doors that are **hot** to the touch.
 - » When you come to a closed door, feel the doorknob and door (always with the back of your hand) to make sure that fire is not on the other side.
- If either is hot, leave the door closed and use your secondary escape route.
- If the door feels cool, open it slowly. Be ready to shut it quickly if heavy smoke or fire is present.
- If you can't get out, close the door and cover vents and cracks around doors to keep the smoke out.
- Stay where you are and signal for help at the window with a light-colored cloth or a flashlight.
- If your clothes catch fire, stop, drop, and roll.
 - » Stop immediately, drop to the ground, and cover your face with your hands.
- Roll over or back and forth until the fire is out.
- If you cannot stop, drop, and roll, smother the flames with a blanket or towel.
- Use cool water to treat any burns immediately for three to five minutes, and cover with a clean, dry cloth.
- **Call 9-1-1** or your local emergency number.
- **Meet** at your designated meeting place outside and take attendance.
- **Once out, stay out!** Do not go back in for any reason.
- If someone is missing, or pets are trapped inside your home, tell the firefighters right away. They are equipped to perform rescues safely.

Where to Find Additional Information

- U.S. Fire Administration—<http://www.usfa.fema.gov>
 - » Fire Escape Plan Grid—http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/escape_grid.pdf
 - » Home Safety Checklist—http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/home_safety_checklist.pdf
 - » “Have a Fire Drill” Bookmark— http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/fire_drill_bookmark.pdf

