

## **The Time to Make a Family Safe Escape Plan is... Now!**

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The National Fire Protection Association theme for 2007 is "PRACTICE YOUR ESCAPE PLAN". It is something we all mean to get to, but often forget. Fire is a leading cause of preventable death in the home. Fire safety starts with everyone in your household being prepared. Some general recommendations from the *Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department, Home Safety Council, and the National Fire Protection Association*:

- Early warning is a key element of your fire escape plan. Every home needs working smoke alarms on each story, outside the bedrooms, and in the bedrooms to protect every place that people sleep. Sleep with bedroom doors closed.
- Sketch out a floor plan of your home, including all rooms, windows, interior and exterior doors, stairways, fire escapes and smoke alarms. Make sure that every family member is familiar with the layout.
- Identify and remedy anything in your home that could possibly interfere with your ability to get out quickly in an emergency, such as windows that are stuck or heavy furniture blocking an exit.
- You need a primary and secondary exit. If you have a multi-story home, consider if you need to purchase fire escape ladders for upstairs bedrooms. If so, they should be part of your fire drill, deployed safely from a ground-floor window for practice.
- Push the "test button" on a smoke alarm to ensure everyone will recognize the sound of the alarm if it goes off. Make sure your smoke alarms are not more than 10 years old.
- Select two escape routes from each room and mark them clearly on the plan.
- Ensure that family members with special needs, such as someone who is ill or frail, or small children, have a buddy to help them get out safely. If anyone in the household has a hearing impairment, purchase special smoke alarms that use strobes and/or vibrations to signal a fire.
- Designate a place (family meeting place) to meet outside so that everyone can be accounted and someone can be assigned to go to a neighbor's to call 911. Make sure you can be seen by the fire department. Teach your family not to re-enter a burning home.
- Tell your guests "the plan" when they come to your home.
- Practice makes perfect. Every second counts during a real fire. Hold family fire drills twice a year and at various times until the escape plans become second nature. Once you've mastered the escape process, hold a drill when family members are sleeping so you can test each family member's ability to waken and respond to the smoke alarm.
- Come up with a safe plan for small children, infants or those with mobility issues living in the home.

### **Manufactured Homes**

- Make sure you have enough smoke alarms. They should be in each bedroom, in the hall and in or near the family/living areas. Change the batteries every 6 months.
- Be familiar with the egress windows of the home. Practice opening them for escape.

### **Apartments**

- Make sure that you're familiar with your building's evacuation plan, which should illustrate what residents are supposed to do in the event of an emergency.
- Identify all exits in your building. Could you get out if there was no light?
- Never use the elevator. If someone in your family has difficulty climbing down steps, make sure to incorporate a contingency for this.
- Stay low in smoke. In the event of a fire, if both stairwells are filled with smoke, stay in your apartment and wait for the firefighters.
- Stay by the window. Open, don't break the window. Signal to firefighters.

*Come visit us at our Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department's Open Houses and learn more:*

Fire Station # 1- 1710 County Road 10, Spring Lake Park **October 13<sup>th</sup> 12-2pm**

Fire Station #3- 11920 Ulysses Street, Blaine, **October 14<sup>th</sup> 1-4pm**