

A Fire Safety Checklist

It didn't seem like a fire hazard at the time, but when 11-year-old Erin plugged her new computer into the extension cord, she heard a pop and saw a spark come from the outlet. She quickly unplugged her computer, and ran and got her mom.

Luckily for Erin and her family, there was no fire.

Fires are scary and dangerous. They hurt and destroy things in your home. And they spread quickly. That's why it's so important for you and your family to know what to do in a fire. It's even more important that you know how to prevent them. You and your family can help to make your home safer from fire by identifying and correcting potential fire hazards in your home.

What can you do to make sure that you and your family are less likely to be harmed by fire? The first thing is to perform a room-by-room search with your family, looking for possible fire hazards.

Plan Ahead

What would you do if there were a fire in your home? Even though you're careful to watch for trouble spots and your family practices fire prevention, it is still possible for a fire to break out. In that case, you need to know how to get out fast! Fires can be loud and burn very fast. Their smoke can make a room very dark. What you need is a fire escape plan that helps you to get out of your home quickly. You can help your family make an escape plan. Here's how:

- *Find two ways out.* Identify two ways out of every room, usually a door and a window. Then, if one way is blocked by the fire, you can get out the other way. Together draw a simple map of your home's floor plan and mark the different escape routes.
- *Plan a meeting place.* Next, pick a safe and easy-to-remember place outside your home- a tree, a mailbox, a fence, etc. It should be well away from the building. Meet there if there is a fire. That way, your family will be certain that everyone has escaped.

Get Out Fast

If you find yourself in a fire, get out as fast as you can. Don't stop for toys or pets. Here's how:

- *Test the door.* Before opening any door in a fire, test the door with the back of your hand. If it is hot, fire could be on the other side, so keep it closed. Opening the door will allow more smoke and dangerous gasses into the room. Instead, think about other ways you can get out. Can you get out through a window? If you can, go. If not, use wet towels, if possible, to seal the cracks around the door.

Call 9-1-1 if there is a phone in the room. Tell them you are trapped, and tell them exactly where you are in the building. Open a window and stay near it but close to the floor. The air will be fresher there. Try to attract attention to yourself. Wave something bright out the window—clothing, a towel, a flashlight. Yell or blow a loud whistle.

If the door is not hot, open it slowly. There may be smoke in the hallway. Try to cover your mouth and nose. A wet towel is best, but a T-shirt or anything within reach can help protect your lungs from dangerous smoke and fumes.

- *Crawl low under smoke.* If there is smoke, crawl low under it to get out. The air near the floor is cooler and cleaner. You can breathe more easily and see better to escape faster.
- *Stop, drop, and roll.* If your clothes catch on fire, don't run. Stop, drop, and roll right where you are. Cover your face with your hands to protect it, drop to the ground, and roll over and over until the fire is out.
- *Learn how to report a fire.* After you get out, call 9-1-1 or the fire department. Call from a safe place outside of a burning building. Say you are reporting a fire. Give the information you are asked for. Speak slowly and clearly. Don't hang up until you are told to do so.
- *Stay outside no matter what.* Don't go back for anything.
- *Be sure to go over the plan with each person in your home.* Practice leaving the house using the different routes and meeting at the agreed-upon meeting spot. It's also a good idea to practice your plan at night since half of fire-related injuries in the home occur between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Timing Is Everything

Time is important when a fire starts in the home. Everyone should be taught about the dangers of fire and what to expect so that each person can act quickly. That's why it's important to drill, drill, and drill every six months. By making sure your home is free of potential fire hazards and by having a fire escape plan, you and your family will have a better chance at staying safe.