

HOUSE FIRE

Each year, more than 4,000 Americans die and more than 25,000 are injured in fires, many of which could be prevented. Direct property loss due to fires is estimated at \$8.6 billion annually.

To protect yourself, it is important to understand the basic characteristics of fire. Fire spreads quickly; there is no time to gather valuables or make a phone call. In just two minutes, a fire can become life-threatening. In five minutes, a residence can be engulfed in flames.

Heat and smoke from fire can be more dangerous than the flames. Inhaling the super-hot air can sear your lungs. Fire produces poisonous gases that make you disoriented and drowsy. Instead of being awakened by a fire, you may fall into a deeper sleep. Asphyxiation is the leading cause of fire deaths, exceeding burns by a three-to-one ratio.

Before a Fire

Smoke Alarms

- Install smoke alarms. Properly working smoke alarms decrease your chances of dying in a fire by half.
- Place smoke alarms on every level of your residence. Place them outside bedrooms on the ceiling or high on the wall (4 to 12 inches from ceiling), at the top of open stairways, or at the bottom of enclosed stairs and near (but not in) the kitchen.
- Test and clean smoke alarms once a month and replace batteries at least once a year. Replace smoke alarms once every 10 years.

Escaping the Fire

- Review escape routes with your family. Practice escaping from each room.
- Make sure windows are not nailed or painted shut. Make sure security gratings on windows have a fire safety opening feature so they can be easily opened from the inside.
- Consider escape ladders if your residence has more than one level, and ensure that burglar bars and other antitheft mechanisms that block

outside window entry are easily opened from the inside.

- Teach family members to stay low to the floor (where the air is safer in a fire) when escaping from a fire.
- Clean out storage areas. Do not let trash, such as old newspapers and magazines, accumulate.

Flammable Items

- Never use gasoline, benzene, naphtha, or similar flammable liquids indoors.
- Store flammable liquids in approved containers in well-ventilated storage areas.
- Never smoke near flammable liquids.
- Discard all rags or materials that have been soaked in flammable liquids after you have used them. Safely discard them outdoors in a metal container.
- Insulate chimneys and place spark arresters on top. The chimney should be at least three feet higher than the roof. Remove branches hanging above and around the chimney.



More on back.