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**Keep Your Family Safe: Make Fire Escape Planning Part of Your Spring Activities**

Spring is in full swing and it’s time to get outdoors! The warmer temperatures make for the perfect environment to gather your family and plan an escape route in case of a home fire.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that U.S. fire departments respond to an average of one home fire every 86 seconds, and an average of 358,500 home structure fires per year. These fires caused 12,300 civilian injuries, 2,510 civilian deaths, and $6.7 billion in direct damage. Less than half of all households have a fire-escape plan, according to the NFPA, but having one can mean the difference between life and death. Having an escape route planned can greatly increase the chances that should a fire occur, your family can make it out safely. With modern construction methods and the amount of synthetic materials in the average home, the amount of time you have to safely escape a home fire is only about three minutes. Now, more than ever, knowing what to do in case of fire is a must!

Older adults and children are most at risk when it comes to escaping a home fire. Studies have proven that children often sleep through the sound of smoke alarms. Older adults may move more slowly or have trouble hearing smoke alarms. Consider the makeup of your family when you plan your escape route! Make sure your smoke alarms are in working order and are placed where all occupants can hear them. Fires spread more quickly the more oxygen they have, but you can slow the spread of a house fire, as well as reduce toxic smoke levels if you keep your bedroom doors closed while you’re sleeping. Closing your door can dramatically increase your chances of survival. Be prepared before a fire starts!

**Planning Your Escape**

* Talk about what you should do if a fire occurs. Include what each person will need to do to get out safely. Help everyone understand that fire is fast and smoke is a poison that kills.
* Think about the needs of your family. If someone uses a cane or wheelchair, decide who will help him or her get out. If someone uses a hearing aid or eyeglasses, be sure that these items are kept next to the bed.
* Make sure that you have a working smoke alarm on every level of your home. Put alarms inside and outside all sleeping areas. Test your smoke alarms to make sure that they work. Make sure that everyone can hear the smoke alarm sound. Without a smoke alarm, you may not wake up, and the poisonous smoke can kill you in your sleep.
* Find two ways out of every room. Knowing two exits is important in case one is blocked or dangerous to use. Know how to open doors and windows that lead outside.
* Know where to meet outside your home. If the smoke alarm sounds, go outside. Call 911 from the outside meeting place.
* Practice your plan. Everyone should be included. Walk through the steps that you will take if the smoke alarm sounds. Make sure that everyone knows what to do to get out safely.

There is a wealth of resources available on the internet which will help you make a fire escape plan. Free templates are available at <http://bit.ly/getoutsafe>. The NFPA also has some great resources to help guide you along the way at <http://bit.ly/nfpaescapeplanning>. Once you have formulated your plan, practice, practice, practice. Going forward, practice the plan at least twice a year. Nothing is more important than your family’s safety. Having a fire escape plan can greatly increase the chances that your family can get out safely should a fire occur in your home.

Insert your Department name relies on brave men and women to volunteer their time to serve as volunteer firefighters to ensure that every call for help is answered. Men and women with almost every skill set are needed. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, please contact Insert your Department name at Insert website or call Insert your Dept. phone number.

There are volunteer opportunities at your local volunteer fire department for citizens willing to work hard. To learn more about becoming a volunteer firefighter and joining your local volunteer fire department, please visit [www.VolunteerFireTN.org](http://www.VolunteerFireTN.org).

*About the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. (TFCA)
The TFCA provides leadership to career and volunteer Fire Chiefs, Chief Fire Officers and managers of emergency service organizations throughout the State of Tennessee through vision, information, education, service and representation to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The TN Fire Chiefs Association (TFCA) also encourages the professional advancement of the fire service to ensure and maintain greater protection of life and property from fire and natural or man-made disasters. The TFCA’s mission is to provide leadership to career and volunteer chiefs, chief fire officers, and managers of Emergency Service Organizations throughout the State of Tennessee through vision, information, education, service and representation to enhance their professionalism and capabilities. More information about the TFCA is located at* [*www.tnfirechiefs.com*](http://www.tnfirechiefs.com) *.*

*About Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS)
The Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association was awarded a SAFER recruitment and retention grant in 2016 and partnered with the International Association of Fire Chiefs to identify recruitment and retention goals, strategies and marketing methodologies that would benefit not only participating departments, but all fire departments in the state. 19 departmental groups, consisting of 64 departments, were selected to participate in Phase I of the program. The VWS program is also operating in Virginia through the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association and Connecticut through the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association. There is also currently a National VWS effort focusing on diversity and new trainings. More information about the Tennessee VWS can be found at* [*www.VolunteerFireTN.org*](http://www.VolunteerFireTN.org)*.*

*(Insert info about your department in similar format to above)*