



FIRE SAFETY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



PLAN AROUND YOUR ABILITIES

If someone in your household has a disability, consider how it could affect the ability to escape a fire in your home. Call the local fire department and ask for guidance. Talk to the other members of your household about any special needs.

Every home should have an **escape plan** and all members of the household should practice it at least twice a year. You, and everyone you live with, should know at least two ways out of every room and every way out of the building. If any disability requires special arrangements, make them part of the escape plan.

For example, if one cannot escape without assistance, designate a member of the household to help and decide on backups in case the person who would assist isn't home.

Know all exits. It's especially important for people with limited mobility to sleep near an exit. If the person lives in a multi-level home, it's best they sleep on the ground floor and near an exit. Install a telephone extension in their room.

Consider having ramps constructed for emergency exits.

INSTALL SMOKE ALARMS

Smoke alarms save lives by warning of a fire in time to escape. Have a smoke alarm installed outside the sleeping area. If you sleep with the doors closed, have one installed inside as well. If you have difficulty hearing, there are smoke alarms that flash a light as well as sound an alarm. There are also smoke alarms that sound a lower pitch alarm that may be easier for people with impaired hearing to hear.

All smoke alarms should be tested monthly and their batteries changed once a year (or sooner if they "chirp" to tell you their batteries are low). Smoke alarms can be tested by using a broom handle to push the test button.

Consider installing an automatic home fire sprinkler system. Sprinklers can contain and even extinguish a home fire in less time than it takes the fire department to arrive.

SLEEP NEAR A PHONE. The majority of fatal home fires happen at night, and you may have to escape through smoke or in the dark. If you are unable to leave on your own, call the fire department by calling **9-1-1** and tell them where you are. If you have a cordless phone, try to take it with you if you have to escape a fire.

KEEP A FLASHLIGHT HANDY

Have a working flashlight in your sleeping area. You may need it to escape in the dark or signal firefighters if you are trapped by a fire.

ESCAPE TIPS:

If your smoke alarm goes off, don't hesitate. Respond immediately, following your escape plan. If you have a cordless phone, take it with you when you escape. If you need help, yell – the person designated to assist you may not know there is a fire. If he or she does not arrive quickly, call **9-1-1**.

- **Test doors before you open them.** Before opening a door to escape, reach up as high as you can and touch around the door – at the knob and around the frame – with the back of your hand. If this area feels warm, don't open it. If it's cool, open the door cautiously and be ready to slam it shut if there's smoke or flame on the other side.
- **Crawl low under smoke to your exit.** If you encounter smoke while you're escaping, try another escape route. If you must escape through smoke, crawl on your hands and knees, keeping your head 1 to 2 feet (30 to 60 centimeters) above the floor, where the air will be cleaner. If you are unable to do this, return to a room away from the fire and call the fire department.

IF YOU CANNOT ESCAPE

If blocked exit paths or mobility problems prevent you from escaping, close as many doors as you can between you and the fire. Use duct tape or cloth to seal around doors and cover all vents to keep smoke out. Call **9-1-1** – **even if someone has responded to the fire** – and tell them exactly where you are trapped. Wait by a window to be rescued. If possible signal to firefighters by waving a flashlight beam or light-colored cloth.