

Home Fire Escape Planning

How to Escape

- ❑ **Get low and go under smoke.** All household members should learn how to “get low and go” under the layer of smoke hanging under the ceiling during a fire emergency. In a fire, the air closer to the floor will be relatively free of toxic smoke and gases and will be easier to breathe.
- ❑ **Check the door with your hand.** If the door is hot, fire could already be burning through! That's when you'll use your alternate exit. If the door is cool it may be safe. Brace your shoulder against it, turn your face away and open it a crack to check. If there is any smoke or heat, slam the door shut and head for an alternate exit.
- ❑ **Make sure everyone knows how to open the windows in your home.** In most cases, a window will be your best alternate exit. If you have to smash it to get out - do it. Place a blanket or pillow on the windowsill to protect yourself from broken glass. If the bedroom windows are high above the ground, consider getting fire ladders, and practice so everyone knows how to use them.
- ❑ **Close doors behind you.** A closed door can hold back toxic smoke and flames in an emergency and could give you a few lifesaving seconds to escape.
- ❑ **Get out, stay out.** Decide on a meeting place outside so everyone can be accounted for. Designate one person to find a phone away from the home, and call the fire department. Do not go back inside the house until the fire department says it is okay to do so.
- ❑ **If you are trapped, protect yourself until help arrives.** If you can't leave the building because smoke or fire is blocking your exits, call the fire department to report your exact location and gather in a room with a window to await firefighters' arrival. Close all doors between you and the fire. Stuff air vents and cracks with duct tape, wet blankets, towels or clothing. Then, carefully open a window at the top or bottom, if possible, to let fresh air in. Don't break the window – if smoke enters the room from outside the building, you won't be able to protect yourself. Wave a flashlight or a light coloured cloth at the window to let the fire department know where you are.
- ❑ **Talk to your fire department.** Your local fire prevention officer can help you plan and practice your escape plan and help determine and overcome any limiting factors or challenges.

Apartment Dwellers

- Know your building's evacuation plan and participate in fire drills, which should be held at least once a year.
- Identify all available exits, including hallways and stairways. Windows in high-rise buildings are often not available as a source of escape.
- Never use the elevator in a fire emergency.
- If you can't leave the building due to smoke or fire blocking your exits, follow the guidelines outlined above for trapped occupants.

Older Adults and the Impaired

- Consider sleeping in a room on the ground floor level to make emergency escape quicker and easier.

For more information, please contact the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at (780) 422-9000 (dial 310-000 for toll-free access outside of Edmonton) or email: aema@gov.ab.ca

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