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Planning a Safe Fire Escape Plan

These tips, courtesy of the U.S. Fire Administration, are provided to help create an escape plan.

Smoke alarms are life savers. The primary fire safety strategy for any home is to warn the occupants early. The best way to get the earliest warning of danger is by installing sufficient smoke alarms. Homes should have a smoke alarm near the bedrooms, but not so close to the kitchen that you have problems with alarms from cooking. It's a good idea to have a smoke alarm in each bedroom, especially if you sleep with the door closed.

Plan your escape. The other part of the fire safety plan is for everyone to get out quickly. If you awake in the middle of the night to a fire, your thinking may be confused. Therefore, it is important that you practice your escape plan ahead of time. That way, your whole family will know what to do. Manufactured homes have more ways to escape than most other homes. There are always two doors, and every bedroom has an emergency escape window. Make sure everyone knows how to open the emergency windows so no time is wasted when fire strikes. These windows are labeled with operating instructions. Everyone in the family, as well as frequent visitors and babysitters, should practice the escape plan, including opening the escape windows.

Can you beat the clock? Most people do not realize how quickly fires can grow. A home fire can become deadly in as few as three minutes. Can your family get out that quickly? Consider that it may take one minute for the smoke alarm to sound and for you to recognize the danger. If you have young children or are elderly, you may need another minute to get ready. This leaves only one minute for everyone to get to an exit, open it and get out. By practicing your escape, you can make every second count.

Steps to a safe escape:

- Have at least two working smoke alarms, and test them monthly.
- Plan two ways out of every room.
- Practice your escape plan twice every year.
- Practice crawling low under smoke.
- Have a prearranged meeting place outside your home.
- Call the fire department from a neighbor's home.
- Once you're outside, stay out.