



FIRE IN YOUR HOME

Every day Americans experience the horror of a home fire but most people don't understand the characteristics of fire. If a fire occurs in your home, **GET OUT, STAY OUT** and **CALL 911** for help.

- **Fire is FAST!**

There is little time! In less than 30 seconds a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. In only 60 seconds thick black smoke will fill a house. In only 5 minutes fire can engulf your entire home. Most deadly fires occur in the home when people are asleep. If you wake up to a fire, you won't have time to grab valuables because fire spreads too quickly and the smoke is too thick. There is only time to escape.

- **Fire is HOT!**

Heat is more threatening than flames. A fire's heat alone can kill. Room temperatures in a fire can be 100 degrees at floor level and rise to 600 degrees at eye level. Inhaling this super-hot air will scorch your lungs. This heat can melt clothes to your skin. In five minutes, a room can get so hot that everything in it ignites at once: this is called flashover.

- **Fire is DARK!**

Fire isn't bright, it is pitch black. Fire starts bright, but quickly produces black smoke and complete darkness. If you wake up to a fire you may be blinded, disoriented and unable to find your way around the home you've lived in for years.

- **Fire is DEADLY!**

Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do. Fire uses up the oxygen you need and produces smoke and poisonous gases that kill. Breathing even small amounts of smoke and toxic gases can make you drowsy, disoriented and short of breath. The odorless, colorless fumes can lull you into a deep sleep before the flames reach your door. You may not wake up in time to escape.

Only when we know the true nature of fire can we prepare our families and ourselves.

1. Fire Prevention – Remove the Hazards

The most effective way to protect yourself, your family and your home from fire is to identify and remove fire hazards. Most home fires occur in the kitchen while cooking and are the leading cause of injuries from fire. Common causes of fires at night are carelessly discarded cigarettes, sparks from fireplaces without spark screens or glass doors, and heating appliances left too close to furniture or other combustibles. These fires can

be particularly dangerous because they may smolder for a long period before being discovered by sleeping residents.

Home fires are preventable! The following are simple steps that each of us can take to prevent a tragedy.

- **Smoke Alarms**

Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms are the only thing in your home that can alert you and your family to a fire 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A working smoke alarm significantly increases your chances of surviving a deadly home fire.

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas.
- Install both ionization AND photoelectric smoke alarms, OR dual sensor smoke alarms, which contain both ionization and photoelectric smoke sensors
- Teach your children what smoke alarms sound like and what to do when they hear one.
- Once a month check whether each alarm in the home is working properly by pushing the test button.
- Replace batteries in smoke alarms at least once a year. Immediately install a new battery if an alarm chirps, warning the battery is low.
- Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years.
- Carbon monoxide alarms are not substitutes for smoke alarms. Know the difference between the sound of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.
- **Never disable a smoke alarm while cooking** – it can be a deadly mistake. Open a window or door and press the “hush” button, wave a towel at the alarm to clear the air, or move the entire alarm several feet away from the location.
- **Considerations for Planning for Older Adults, People Access or Functional Needs**
 - Caregivers are encouraged to check the smoke alarms of those who are unable to do it themselves.
 - Audible alarms for visually impaired people should pause with a small window of silence between each successive cycle so that they can listen to instructions or voices of others.
 - Smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or flashing light are available for the hearing impaired. Contact your local fire department for information about obtaining a flashing or vibrating smoke alarm.
 - Smoke alarms with a strobe light outside the home to catch the attention of neighbors, and emergency call systems for summoning help, are also available.

- **Carbon Monoxide Alarms**

- Install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas.
- If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, move quickly to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door.
- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area.
- Never disable carbon monoxide alarms.

- **Cooking**

- Stay in the kitchen when frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen, even for a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- Stay in the home while simmering, baking, roasting or boiling food. Check it regularly and use a timer to remind you that food is cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire—like pot holders, towels, plastic and clothing— away from the stove.
- Keep pets off cooking surfaces and countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto the burner.
- Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking.

- Do not cook if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.
 - Keep children away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet around the stove.
 - Position barbecue grills at least 10 feet away from siding and deck railings, and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- **Smoking**
 - If you smoke, smoke outside. Most home fires caused by smoking materials start inside the home. Put your cigarettes out in a can filled with sand.
 - Make sure cigarettes and ashes are out. The cigarette really needs to be completely stubbed out in an ashtray. Soak cigarette butts and ashes in water before throwing them away. Never toss hot cigarette butts or ashes in the trash can.
 - Check for cigarette butts. Chairs and sofas catch on fire fast and burn fast. Don't put ashtrays on them. If people have been smoking in the home, check for cigarettes under cushions.
 - Never smoke in a home where oxygen is used, even if it is turned off. Oxygen can be explosive and makes fire burn hotter and faster.
 - Be alert - don't smoke in bed! If you are sleepy, have been drinking, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy, put your cigarette out first.
- **Electrical and Appliance Safety**
 - Frayed wires can cause fires. Replace all worn, old or damaged appliance cords immediately and do not run cords under rugs or furniture.
 - Buy electrical products evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
 - If an appliance has a three-prong plug, use it only in a three-slot outlet. Never force it to fit into a two-slot outlet or extension cord.
 - Use electrical extension cords wisely; never overload extension cords or wall sockets.
 - Immediately shut off, then professionally replace, light switches that are hot to the touch and lights that flicker.
- **Portable Space Heaters**
 - Keep combustible objects at least three feet away from portable heating devices.
 - Buy only heaters evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
 - Check to make the portable heater has a thermostat control mechanism, and will switch off automatically if the heater falls over.
 - Check with your local fire department on the legality of kerosene heater use in your community.
 - Only use crystal clear K-1 kerosene in kerosene heaters. Never overfill it. Use the heater in a well-ventilated room.
- **Fireplaces and Woodstoves**
 - Inspect and clean woodstove pipes and chimneys annually and check monthly for damage or obstructions.
 - Never burn trash, paper, or green wood.
 - Use a fireplace screen heavy enough to stop rolling logs and big enough to cover the entire opening of the fireplace to catch flying sparks.
 - Make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the house or going to bed.
 - Store cooled ashes in a tightly sealed metal container outside the home.

- **Children**

- Take the mystery out of fire play by teaching children that fire is a tool, not a toy.
- Store matches and lighters out of children's reach and sight, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Teach children not to pick up matches or lighters they may find. Instead, they should tell an adult immediately.
- Never leave children unattended near operating stoves or burning candles, even for a short time.
- Check under beds and in closets for burned matches, evidence your child may be playing with fire.

More Prevention Tips

- Avoid using lighted candles.
- Never use the range or oven to heat your home.
- Replace mattresses made before the 2007 Federal Mattress Flammability Standard. Mattresses made since then are required by law to be safer.
- Keep combustible and flammable liquids away from heat sources.
- Always refuel portable generators outdoors.

2. Create and Practice A Fire Evacuation Plan

In the event of a fire, remember that every second counts, so you and your family must always be prepared. Escape plans help you get out of your home quickly. Twice each year, practice your home fire escape plan.

Some tips to consider when preparing this plan include:

- Teach children not to hide from firefighters.
- Ensure that all household members know two ways to escape from every room of your home. If the primary way is blocked by fire or smoke, you will need a second way out. A secondary route might be a window onto a neighboring roof or a collapsible ladder for escape from upper story windows.
- Before opening a door, feel the doorknob and door. If either is hot, leave the door closed and use your second way out.
- If there is smoke coming around the door, leave the door closed and use your second way out.
- If you open a door, open it slowly. Be ready to shut it quickly if heavy smoke or fire is present.
- If smoke, heat or flames block your exit routes, stay in the room with doors closed. Place a wet towel under the door and call the fire department or 9-1-1. Open a window and wave a brightly colored cloth or flashlight to signal for help.
- Teach family members to crawl low (where the air is safer in a fire) under any smoke to your exit - heavy smoke and poisonous gases collect first along the ceiling.
- Practice feeling your way out of the house in the dark or with your eyes closed.
- Make sure everyone knows where to meet outside in case of fire
- Practice escaping from your home at least twice a year and at different times of the day. Practice waking up to smoke alarms, low crawling and meeting outside.
- Make sure everyone knows how to call 9-1-1 and what to say. Practice the call when you hold your fire evacuation drill.
- Teach household members to STOP, DROP and ROLL if their clothes should catch on fire.
- Sleep with your door closed.
- 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. Only purchase collapsible ladders evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL).
- Make sure that windows are not stuck, screens can be taken out quickly, and that security bars can be properly opened. Make sure windows are not nailed or painted shut. Windows and doors with security

bars must have quick release devices to allow them to be opened immediately in an emergency. Make sure everyone in the family understands and practices how to properly operate and open locked or barred doors and windows.

- Only those trained in the proper use and maintenance of fire extinguishers should consider using them when appropriate. Contact your local CERT Volunteer Organization for information on training in your area.
- **Fire Evacuation Planning for Older Adults, People Access or Functional Needs**
 - Live near an exit. You'll be safest on the ground floor if you live in an apartment building. If you live in a multi-story home, arrange to sleep on the ground floor, and near an exit.
 - If you use a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to be sure you get through the doorways.
 - Make any necessary accommodations, such as providing exit ramps and widening doorways, to facilitate an emergency escape.
 - Speak to your family members, building manager, or neighbors about your fire safety plan and practice it with them.
 - Contact your local fire department's non-emergency line and explain your special needs. Ask emergency providers to keep your special needs information on file.
 - Keep a phone near your bed and be ready to call 911 or your local emergency number if a fire occurs.

- **Register with SNAP**



The SNAP registry is an Internet-based system that allows residents to provide information; this will be kept confidential, to public safety officials about their access or functional needs. SNAP does not guarantee priority response to registrants; it assists emergency response officials in planning and responding to the requirements of people with access and functional needs during a disaster by integrating database and mapping technology together. Go to snap.lacounty.gov and click on "Register Now."

- **Register with Vial of L.I.F.E.**



- The Vial of L.I.F.E. is a nation-wide effort to put medical and prescription information into the hands of first responders. L.I.F.E. stands for Life Saving Information in Emergencies. The program is simple. Residents fill out a medical information form and place it inside a pill vial, place the pill vial in the top shelf of the refrigerator and put a magnet on the outside of the refrigerator to let paramedics know the information is inside the refrigerator.

3. If a Fire Should Occur

In the event of a fire, remember to follow your escape plan:

- Remember to **GET OUT, STAY OUT** and **CALL 9-1-1**.
- When the smoke alarm sounds, get out fast. You may have only seconds to escape safely.
- If there is smoke blocking your door or first way out, use your second way out.
- Smoke is toxic. If you must escape through smoke, get low, cover your mouth and nose with cloth and go under the smoke to your exit.
- If you can't get to someone needing assistance, leave the home and call 9-1-1 or the fire department. Tell the emergency operator where the person is located.
- If pets are trapped inside your home, tell firefighters right away.

- If you can't get out, close the door and cover vents and cracks around doors with cloth or tape to keep smoke out. If possible place a wet towel under the door. Call 9-1-1 or your fire department. Say where you are and signal for help at the window with a light-colored cloth or a flashlight.
- If your clothes catch fire, stop, drop, and roll – stop immediately, drop to the ground, and cover your face with your hands. Roll over and over or back and forth until the fire is out. If you or someone else cannot stop, drops, and roll, smother the flames with a blanket or towel. Use cool water to treat the burn immediately for 3 to 5 minutes. Cover with a clean, dry cloth. Get medical help right away by calling 9-1-1 or the fire department.

4. Use Caution with Fire Extinguishers

Use a portable fire extinguisher ONLY if you have been trained by the fire department and in the following conditions:

- The fire is confined to a small area, and is not growing.
- The room is not filled with smoke.
- Everyone has exited the building.
- The fire department has been called.
- **Remember the word PASS when using a fire extinguisher:**
 - P – Pull the pin and hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you.
 - A – Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
 - S – Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.
 - S – Sweep the nozzle from side to side.

5. Once You Are Outside and Safe

- Have injuries treated by a medical professional. Wash small wounds with soap and water. To help prevent infection of small wounds, use bandages and replace them if they become soiled, damaged or waterlogged.
- Remain calm. Pace yourself. You may find yourself in the position of taking charge of other people. Listen carefully to what people are telling you, and deal patiently with urgent situations first.
- Check with the fire department to make sure your residence is safe to enter.
- Anyone entering your damaged home should wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, closed-toed rubber-soled shoes or boots and work gloves, plus dust masks, safety goggles and/or a hard hat when necessary.
- **Let Your Family Know You Are Safe**

6. Immediately After the Fire

Recovering from a fire can be a physically and mentally challenging process. Often, the hardest part is knowing where to begin and who to contact. The following checklist serves as a quick reference and guide for you to follow after a fire strikes.

- Contact your local disaster relief service, such as The Red Cross, if you need temporary housing, food and medicines.
- If you are insured, contact your insurance company for detailed instructions on protecting the property, conducting inventory and contacting fire damage restoration companies. If you are not insured, try contacting private organizations for aid and assistance.
- Check with the fire department to make sure your residence is safe to enter. Be watchful of any structural damage caused by the fire.
- The fire department should see that utilities are either safe to use or are disconnected before they leave the site. DO NOT attempt to reconnect utilities yourself.
- Conduct an inventory of damaged property and items. Do not throw away any damaged goods until after an inventory is made.

- Try to locate valuable documents and records. Refer to information on contacts and the replacement process inside this brochure.
- If you leave your home, contact the local police department to let them know the site will be unoccupied.
- Begin saving receipts for any money you spend related to fire loss. The receipts may be needed later by the insurance company and for verifying losses claimed on income tax.
- Notify your mortgage company of the fire.
- Check with an accountant or the Internal Revenue Service about special benefits for people recovering from fire loss.

For more information on what you should do after a home fire, including valuing your property, replacing documents, and salvage hints, visit the FEMA website. <http://www.fema.gov/>

FEMA Publications

If you require more information about any of these topics, the following resources for the U.S. Fire Administration may be helpful.

- [Smoke Alarms: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Escape from Fire: Once You're Out, Stay Out!](#)
- [Let's Have Fun with Fire Safety: Marty & Jett's Activity Book](#)
- [Is Your Home Fire Safe? Door Knob Hanger](#)
- [Winter Fires: Safety Tips for the Home](#)
- [Fire Safety Checklist for Older Adults](#)
- [After the Fire: Returning to Normal](#)

RELATED WEBSITES

Find additional information on how to plan and prepare for a fire and learn about available resources by visiting the following websites:

- [U.S. Fire Administration](#)
- [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [NOAA Watch](#)
- [American Red Cross](#)

Publications

If you require more information about any of these topics, the following resources for the American Red Cross may be helpful.

- [Fire Safety Fact Sheet \[PDF\]](#)
- [Escape Planning \[PDF\]](#)
- [Holiday Fire Safety \[PDF\]](#)
- [Home Heating Fires \[PDF\]](#)
- [Cooking Fires \[PDF\]](#)
- [Children and Fires \[PDF\]](#)
- [Smoke Alarms \[PDF\]](#)
- [Candle Safety \[PDF\]](#)
- [CO Poisoning \[PDF\]](#)

City of Long Beach:

Disaster Preparedness:

<http://www.longbeach.gov/disasterpreparedness>

Police Department

<http://www.longbeach.gov/police/default.asp>

Health and Human Services

<http://www.longbeach.gov/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=9067>

City of Long Beach Emergency Phone Numbers:

Emergencies Dial 911

- **Gas Department:** 562.570.2140
- **Water and Sewer:** 562.570.2390
- **Public Works:** 562.570.2700
- **Police Non-Emergency** 562.435.6711
- **Fire Non-Emergency** 562.570.9400

Social Media:

You can also sign up for any of the City of Long Beach social media accounts and receive updates on the City's disaster responses, as well as information to assist you.

www.facebook.com/CityofLongBeachCA

<https://twitter.com/LongBeachCity>

www.youtube.com/user/LongBeachCityCA

