



Teaching Children About Safe Fire Exits at Home

Seven out of 10 fatal fires in Canada occur in the home. Having a working smoke alarm is one of the most valuable things you can do to protect yourself and your family. But just as important is knowing *exactly* what you are going to do when that smoke alarm goes off. You may have less than two minutes to escape before smoke creates life-threatening conditions.

Creating and practicing fire escape routes using the following tips from Fireproof Children/Prevention First, an international fire safety and injury prevention center, is a fun family activity that also protects your loved ones.

- Use a piece of graph paper to draw a floor plan of your home, including every floor.
- Mark all windows and doors, label each bedroom, and note where smoke detectors are located (you should have a smoke detector on every level of your home and outside of sleeping areas).
- Plan two escape routes from every room, especially bedrooms. Include escape plans for anyone with special needs.
- Choose a family meeting spot a safe distance from your home, where everyone will gather and wait for the fire department.
- Have the whole family discuss the escape route and the meeting place. Decide who will be “monitor,” and make sure everyone gets out. Explain that no one should ever go back into a burning building; if a family member or pet is missing you will tell the firefighters, who are equipped to perform rescues safely.
- Most importantly, PRACTICE your escape route at least twice a year. Have everyone participate, and make sure everyone can unlock doors and windows quickly. Pretend that an exit is blocked, and practice alternative escape routes. Pretend the lights are out and practice finding the way out.
- Go over what to do if trapped in an upstairs bedroom: close the bedroom door, place a towel or blanket across the bottom of the door, and call for help from the window. The fire department will respond and help you get out well before a fire burns through even a hollow door.



- A visit to your local firehouse will give kids the chance to become familiar with firefighters and the gear they wear, helping them not be afraid to “go to the firefighter.” Take advantage of a firehouse “open house” or call to arrange a visit.

Kids can find games and activities that teach fire safety skills at www.playsafebesafe.com.

Parents can learn more about the importance of fire exit routes and drills from “Know How to Get Out – Fast” at www.fireproofchildren.com.

Other useful fire safety resources:

Staying Alive www.stayingalive.ca

Sparky the Fire Dog, National Fire Protection Association
www.nfpa.org/sparky

City of Ottawa, Fire Prevention and Education
www.city.ottawa.on.ca/city_services/fire

Canada Safety Council www.safety-council.org

Safe Kids Canada www.safekidscanada.ca

The Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council
www.firesafetycouncil.com