

NOT WHAT SHE HAD PLANNED

Chloe's Story

As a new mom-to-be, Chloe thought she was prepared for everything. She attended all sorts of birthing classes, she had the baby's nursery all set up, and she had stock piled enough diapers to last months. Now all she had to do was wait. As she and her husband went to bed one night, she had a nagging feeling that kept her up all night. Suddenly, that's when she heard it—a loud POP! It came from the living room and she waddled to go see what the problem was. Even though their TV had been turned off, the outlet started smoking and eventually caught fire. "Wake up, Mark!" she screamed, "There's a fire in the living room!" He rushed in with the fire extinguisher, but it was no use. The sheetrock had caught fire and it was too massive to put out.

Chloe started running to the nursery to grab as many of the baby's things as possible, but Mark had to grab her and practically push her out of the door. "Are you crazy? We have to get out now and call the fire department!" he yelled. As smoke quickly filled the house, it became really hard to see, and they had to start crawling. The only problem was they had never planned for any of this, so they couldn't find their way to the front door.

Luckily, their neighbor who was a bartender was just getting home from her shift. She saw the flames and immediately called 9-1-1. As Mark and Chloe started to get disoriented from the smoke, the firefighter burst through the door. They were both rescued and vowed they would make a better fire escape plan for the future. A few more weeks had gone by, and they named their new baby after the firefighter who saved their lives.



TEST YOURSELF

Let's see how well you know how to plan to escape from a fire!

1. There should be at least one smoke alarm installed outside of each bedroom and on every level of the home.
 - a.) True
 - b.) False
2. What does it mean when smoke alarms are interconnected?
 - a.) They're all connected by one battery.
 - b.) They're all connected so that when one sounds, they all sound.
 - c.) They all look the same.
 - d.) None of the above.
3. When are fires most deadly?
 - a.) On the weekends when everyone's home
 - b.) At night when it's harder to find an exit
 - c.) During the day when everyone's at home or school
 - d.) In the morning when everyone's getting dressed at the same time
4. Which of the following is NOT part of "sealing for safety" method?
 - a.) Shut all of the doors between you and the fire to slow it down.
 - b.) Use duct tape or towels under the doors to keep smoke out.
 - c.) Not calling the fire department to let them know exactly where you are.
 - d.) If near a window, wave a flashlight or brightly colored cloth so firefighters can see you.
5. When is it all right for you to enter a burning building?
 - a.) If you forgot your birth certificate
 - b.) If you need to grab some shoes
 - c.) If you forgot your pet
 - d.) Never.

Answers: 1.A 2.B 3.B 4.C 5.D

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FIRE ESCAPE PLAN



PLAN, PRACTICE, SURVIVE



WHAT IS A FIRE ESCAPE PLAN?

Imagine this. You and your spouse are sleeping when you wake up to a faint smell of smoke. You have two children; your teenage daughter is sleeping at friend's house tonight, but your younger son is sleeping upstairs. Your daughter has a bad habit of leaving her straightener on, so you instantly have a sense of dread as the smell gets stronger as you leave your room. You know what is happening, so you wake your spouse up, and you follow through with your fire escape plan. You both make it out of the house in just a few minutes, and your spouse is already on the phone with the fire department. They're on their way, and everyone is safe because you had a plan and stuck to it.

The goal of a fire escape plan is not only to escape, but to do so safely and quickly. A fire escape plan will be unique to everyone, but is it necessary? Absolutely! You wouldn't wing a test or a big presentation at work, so why would you improvise an escape plan from a flaming building?

FIRE DRILLS AND CHILDREN

Fires are scary whether you're a kid or an adult. For households with children, it's important to include them in the planning stage so they'll be more confident if a fire ever occurs.

- Let them draw a map of your house's floor plan and tell them to put an X where all of the fire alarms are. Help them see how many ways they can find out of the house on the map.
- Teach children to never hide during a fire; they must get out and stay out.
- Let children practice and master fire escape drills during the day before trying them at night when they are sleeping. Your goal should be to train—not traumatize—so letting them know there will be a drill before they go to sleep can be just as effective as a surprise drill.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Putting the Plan Together

Here are some steps that everyone in the family can do to make sure you're all prepared to escape from a fire quickly and safely!

- Make sure everyone who lives in the home is able to help come up with the plan. People, especially children, are more likely to remember plans if they're able to help come up with them as opposed to just being told what to do.
- Walk throughout the home and examine all possible escape routes. Try to come up with at least two ways to exit each room in your house whether it's by door or window.
- Know where all of the smoke alarms are, and make sure they're in working order. There should be at least one installed outside of each bedroom and on every level of the home. There are many smoke alarms on the market today that are interconnected, which means that when one starts blaring, they all start.
- Check all the windows and doors to make sure they can be opened easily. If your home has security bars on any windows or doors, make sure they can be released quickly from the inside.
- If there are infants, elderly adults, or family members with any kind of mobility limitation, make sure there's someone assigned to help them get out of the house. It's also a good idea to assign a backup helper.



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Practice makes perfect whether you're working on a presentation for work, studying for a test, or are working on your fire escape plan. Don't just assume that making the plan is sufficient; you need to practice by holding random fire drills for everyone in your family.

- Practice your plan every few months, especially at night. This is when fires are most deadly since it's harder to find a safe exit.
- To do a realistic drill, you should practice getting out with your eyes closed, crawling low to the floor and keeping your mouth covered. The reason for this is because smoke will often make it difficult to see and breathe; therefore, you should practice by crawling because you can stay under the smoke better that way.
- In some cases, fire or smoke may prevent you from being able to leave. To prepare for this, you should practice the "sealing for safety" method: shut all of the doors between you and the fire, use duct tape or towels to seal the door cracks, and cover the air vents to keep the smoke from coming in. Call the fire department to let them know exactly where you are, and wave a flashlight or a colored-cloth at the window. Getting out would be the ideal escape plan, but if you can't, you can still be prepared.

MULTIPLE STORY HOMES, APARTMENT COMPLEXES, OR HI-RISE BUILDINGS

Many Americans don't live in a traditional single family home. You may be one of them, but you can still be prepared and have a fire escape plan.

- If you live in a multi-story home or apartment building, map out as many escape routes as possible to exit stairways on your floor of the building.
- If you live in a high-rise, plan to use the stairs—never the elevator—to escape a fire.
- If your home has two or more floors, every family member, even children, must be able to escape from the second floor. Fire escape ladders are lightweight, collapsible ladders that should be stored in an easy-to-access area.

WHAT TO DO ONCE YOU'RE OUT

Now What?

- Under no circumstances should you re-enter a burning building.
- Choose a meeting place where everyone knows to go once they escape a burning house. It can be a neighbor's house, the mailbox, a light post—just anywhere a safe distance from the house.
- If someone is missing, inform the fire department immediately. They have the tools and resources necessary for rescue missions.