

Individuals with an Intellectual Disability or Developmental Disability may be particularly vulnerable in the event of a fire. If you have an individual with an intellectual disability or developmental disability living in your home, please make certain they are part of the Fire Exit Plan and regularly review the plan with them or with others as it applies to them. It may make the difference between life and death.

FIRE EXIT PLANS

Basic Characteristics of Fire

To protect yourself and the people under your care, it is important to understand the basic characteristics of fire.

Fire is FAST!

In the event of a fire, you won't have time to grab valuables or make a phone call because fire spreads too quickly and the smoke is too thick. There is only time to escape. In just two minutes, a fire can become life-threatening. In five minutes, a home can be engulfed in flames.

Fire is HOT!

Heat is more threatening than flames. A fire's heat alone can kill.

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 and disoriented.

Fire is DEADLY!

Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do. Breathing even small amounts of smoke and toxic gases can make you drowsy, disoriented and short of breath.

Importance of Fire Exit Plans

Panic can be a factor in death or serious injury from fire and is usually a result of people not knowing what to do to reach safety. All families and households are strongly encouraged by Fire Departments to have a FireExit Plan in the case of a fire that requires everyone to evacuate the home.

You and others living in the home should work out the most appropriate Fire Exit Plan for the home. *This is particularly important if one or more people living in the home have a disability and need specific assistance to get out of the home.*

How to Create a Fire Exit Plan

Here are some simple steps to help you develop your Fire Exit Plan:

- Draw a Fire Exit Plan Map of each level of the home and show all doors and windows. If someone in the home isn't able to read, add simple drawings of furniture to help them identify each room. (See drawing below)
- Identify two ways to get out of each room and mark these escape routes on your Fire Exit Plan Map. (See drawing below)
- Include in your Fire Exit Plan a schedule of regular checks to make sure that windows are not stuck, screens can be taken out quickly, and that locks and security bars can be quickly opened by everyone, including individuals with disabilities.

- Family members or staff of the home should be clear on what they are to do to assist others, especially individuals with a disability to evacuate the home. Put these instructions in your Fire Exit Plan.
- People with disabilities who live in the home should be involved in all discussions about the Fire Exit Plan.
- Decide on a meeting place outside the home and mark it on your Fire Exit Plan Map.
- Give everyone clear instructions to stay out of the house once they are out.
- Put your Fire Exit Plan into writing and keep a copy near the telephone or other prominent location in the home, such as on the refrigerator.
- Teach people with disabilities what to do if there is a fire, in case you cannot help them. Give them a copy of the Fire Exit Plan and Map for their room. Show them how to exit during a fire by walking them through the exit routes. Teach them what they should do and not do in the event of a fire.
- You should practice your Fire Exit Plan regularly so that every member of the home is familiar with where to go and what to do in an emergency.

Every person in the household should have information about what he or she needs to do during a fire and there should be regularly scheduled Exit Plan practice sessions in order to improve everyone's chances of survival.

If you have an individual with an intellectual disability living in your home, please make certain they are part of the Fire Exit Plan and regularly review the plan with them or with others as it applies to them.

By taking a little time to be prepared and making sure that everyone knows what to do, you can greatly reduce the risk of death and serious injury.

Sample Fire Exit Plan Map

