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Program Guide: A Home Fire Escape Plan

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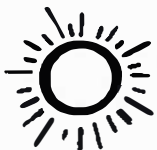
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PROGRAM GUIDE

A HOME FIRE ESCAPE PLAN¹

A home fire escape plan and regular practice with fire exit drills are essential for protecting a family from the potential disaster of a home fire. When a fire occurs, it is critical that everybody knows what to do, and through practice they have the know-how and confidence to do it.

The following suggested activities and discussion outline are provided to assist you in presenting this program.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE:

Upon completion of this program the audience will be able to:

1. Establish an escape plan for their home with primary and alternate escape routes from each room.
2. Identify obstacles which could block a safe escape from the home.

¹Prepared by Larry R. Piercy, Extension Safety Specialist, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Department, College of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0276. Revised 9/95

3. Train other family members in procedures necessary to escape from a home fire.

SUGGESTED TEACHING ACTIVITIES AND MATERIALS:

1. Use this program on fire escape planning in series with the program "Smoke Detectors Can Save Your Life" and emphasize the importance of smoke detectors for early warning of a fire.
2. Use the one page "Fire Escape Planning Guide" and have each person sketch a floor plan of each level of their home. Mark normal escape routes on the plan in black and alternate emergency escape routes in red.
3. Contact your local fire department for window decals which will alert the fire fighter or other rescue person to the location of children, elderly or disabled persons who may need assistance in escaping.
4. Other activities could include contacting homes in the community to help families with escape plans and/or distribute decals for the bedroom windows of children, elderly or disabled.
5. The following materials and visual aids are available from Larry Piercy, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Department, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0276.
 - a. One page "Fire Escape Planning Guide" for individual use in developing a home escape plan.

HOME-FIRE ESCAPE PLAN**LEADER NOTES****DISCUSSION OUTLINE**

- I. Importance of a home fire escape plan.
 - A. It enables people who have been asleep to react immediately to a fire.
 - B. It allows children to feel more secure in how they react to a fire.
 - C. It lessens fear, panic, and indecision at a time when quick action is required.
- II. Developing a practical fire escape plan.
 - A. Draw a floor plan of the home. Include doors, windows, and stairs.
 - B. Determine normal escape routes and mark them on the plan in black.
 - C. Determine alternate emergency escape routes through windows in case the normal ones are blocked by fire. Mark them in red.
 - D. Decide on a gathering point where family will meet once they have escaped the burning building.
 - E. Post the plan along with emergency telephone numbers near the telephone.
- III. Practice fire exit drills in the home.
 - A. Go over the plan with the entire family so that each knows what to do.
 - B. Conduct some drills unannounced and some at night with the lights out.
 - C. Begin the drill with a test of your smoke detector.
 - D. Use both the normal and emergency escape routes in your fire drills.
 - E. Conduct a drill at least once every 6 months.

IV. Some common obstacles to a safe escape.

A. Windows

1. Be sure screens and storm windows can be easily removed.
2. Teach children how to remove screens and storm windows. If out of their reach, provide a chair or stool.
3. If a window will not open teach the family to break the window with a chair and cover the rough edges and broken glass with a blanket or rug.
4. Teach family how to back out of a window and drop to the ground safely.
5. Provide knotted rope or commercial emergency escape ladder for second story windows.

B. Security measures.

1. Windows which are nailed shut, barred, or keylocked and doors secured with deadbolt or double cylinder locks that require a key to open from the inside present special hazards that must be considered carefully.

C. Keep area under windows clear of obstacles that may cause injury if someone would drop to the ground.

V. Special considerations for helping infants, elderly or disabled escape through normal or emergency exits.

- A. Who will help them and what type of assistance will they need?
- B. Move them to rooms on the 1st floor or rooms near exits.
- C. Install additional smoke detectors in the home to give earliest possible warning of a fire.
- D. Use stickers on their windows or doors to let firemen know they need help.
- E. Protect them from spreading smoke by closing their bedroom door at night.

- VI. Other important aides in escaping from a home fire.
- A. For earliest possible warning of a fire, have a smoke detector located outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. For maximum protection place a detector in each bedroom.
 - B. Sleep with doors closed. This can prevent the fire from spreading and protect you from smoke.
 - C. Before you open a door, test the door and knob for heat if you suspect fire on the other side. Always brace yourself and open slowly while feeling for heat.
 - D. Roofs, ledges, balconies, and decks can serve as refuge for you while waiting for further help.
 - E. If trapped in a room, use rugs and blankets to block smoke from entering around the door and open a window and call for help. Never jump from an upper story windows except as a last resort and then always lower yourself out of the window and drop to the ground.
 - F. If you must enter a smoky area crawl or walk in a crouched position to avoid smoke and toxic gases layered near the ceiling and sometimes the floor. Twelve inches above the floor and below door knob height is usually the safety area.
 - G. Keep a flashlight next to your bed. Smoke from a fire can make the inside of a home pitch black even in daylight.
 - H. After you escape go immediately to the pre-arranged meeting place.
 - I. Never re-enter a burning building! Call the fire department from a neighbor's home.
 - J. Post your escape plan, along with important phone numbers near the telephone for easy reference by the family.