

Home Fire Safety: A Guide for the Family

Almost [360,000 residential fires](#) occur each year in the United States. That means that roughly every 87 seconds a residential fire breaks out. About 79% of all fire-related deaths are attributed to fires in the home. It's important that people know these statistics so that they understand how vital it is to take fire safety seriously and the importance of having a plan. Families, especially those with children or people with physical challenges, should make fire safety a part of their regular household routines. They also should make a plan for what they will do if a fire does break out.

Basic Fire Safety Tips for the Family

- Smoke alarms should be installed on each floor of a home. Specifically, they should be installed in [bedrooms](#) and in the hallways leading to bedrooms.
- Some people prefer [heat alarms](#) over smoke alarms for their kitchen. Heat alarms prevent false alarms from the smoke produced by normal cooking.
- [Test all alarms regularly](#). Once a month is best. Change the batteries if the alarms aren't working properly.
- [Make sure everyone in the household knows what the alarm sounds like!](#)

Cooking Safety

- [Never leave a pot or pan unattended on the stove](#). It's especially crucial to keep a close watch when frying. A fire can break out very quickly.
- [Keep surfaces clean and clear of any debris](#). Place kitchen towels and other flammable items safely away from open flames and heat sources.
- Set a timer on a watch or phone when using the oven or a countertop cooker like a toaster oven or air fryer. A timer will help ensure food is removed from any appliance in a timely manner, should someone forget it.
- Should a [pot or pan fire](#) break out, start by covering the fire with a lid or a larger pot or pan. Next, turn off the heat! Don't use water to extinguish the fire. Instead, use a fire extinguisher or baking soda. Don't run the pan out of the kitchen, because that can cause the fire to spread.
- [Wear closely fitting sleeves](#) in the kitchen as a way to prevent catching clothes on fire.
- Kitchens need working [smoke or heat detectors](#).

Candle Safety

- Never leave a lit candle unattended or [fall asleep](#) with one burning. Even very small candles can start very large fires.
- Candles should be placed on a sturdy, [non-flammable surface](#).

- Make sure curtains, papers, clothing, books, and other flammable items are far away from any candles.

Electrical and Appliance Safety

- When buying an electrical appliance (even things as small as flat irons), make sure they were evaluated by an organization like [UL](#).
- Read the labels of all appliances. They often have their own specific warnings and best safety practices.
- Any cord that is frayed, worn or damaged needs to be replaced immediately.
- Only use three-prong outlets in three-slot outlets, and two slot plugs only in two-slot outlets.
- Keep [portable space heaters](#) at least four feet away from furniture and anything that could catch fire. The floors around the heaters should be clear and clean!
- Make sure portable heaters have a [mechanism that turns off the heater should it fall over](#).
- Heaters should only be used in well-ventilated rooms.

Laundry Room Safety

- [Dryers should vent directly to the outdoors](#). The air discharged from running a dryer contains combustible gasses.
- [Metal ductwork is much safer for dryer venting. Plastic ductwork is more likely to melt or catch fire from the gasses or debris.](#)
- [Clean out the lint trap after every load. The ductwork should also be cleaned regularly.](#)
- A professional can help homeowners clean out accumulated lint between the dryer drum and heating element.
- Have a smoke detector installed near the laundry area.

Smoke Alarms, Carbon Monoxide Alarms, and Fire Extinguishers

- [Smoke detectors](#) are the only thing always on guard against fire. Install them everywhere they could be needed!
- Spread the smoke detectors out across the home. They should be installed on each floor, in each bedroom, and in the kitchen and laundry room.
- [Dual sensor smoke alarms](#) are best because they contain both photoelectric and ionization smoke sensors.
- The batteries in a smoke detector should be replaced annually.
- Most manufacturers suggest replacing smoke detectors after ten years.
- Alarms specifically designed for visually or [hearing-impaired people](#) are readily available.
- Monitored fire alarms alert the fire department for the homeowner, and other systems include features like strobing outdoor lights to let the neighbors know there is a fire.

Fire Escape Plan

- [Make an escape plan](#). Each room needs at least two escape routes. This is especially important for bedrooms, where people might be sleeping when a fire breaks out.
- Buy [fire escape ladders](#) for the upper floors of the home.
- Make sure all windows are operable and that everyone knows how to open them.
- Practice “[Stop, Drop, and Roll](#).”
- Also, [practice escape routes](#) with all members of the family. Try them out in the dark, and make sure to do them crawling with eyes closed to better get a feel for what it would be like to do this in an actual fire.
- Small things, like [feeling a doorknob with the back of a hand](#) before opening it, are very important to make sure everyone knows and practices. These small details help improve survival rates!

Additional Resources

- [Home Fire Safety](#)
- [Start Safe: Fire Resources for Parents](#)
- [Keeping Kids Safe from Fire](#)
- [How to Make a Home Fire Escape Plan](#)
- [Fire Safety for the Whole Family!](#)
- [Play Safe! Be Safe! Preschooler Fire Safety](#)
- [Fire Safety for Children](#)
- [Keep Your Family Safe: Fire Safety and Burn Prevention at Home](#)
- [Children and Fire Safety](#)
- [Young Children Can Be Key to Fire-Safe Families](#)
- [Multigenerational Fire Safety](#)
- [6 Steps to Fire Safety](#)
- [Fire Safety for the Whole Family!](#)
- [7 Smart Things Every Family Should Do During Fire Prevention Week](#)

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