Could Your Family Survive a Fire?

Most of us would answer yes, thinking of fire in the movies. Unfortunately, fire does not live up to these expectations. As thrilling as the idea of crashing into a burning building to save someone may sound, in reality this would kill you in just minutes. Since heated air rises, temperatures increase about 100 degrees F every foot. So, at six feet up, the temperature would be 600 degrees F. At these temperatures a person can be instantly burned to death. The smoke produced by fire is not like fog as it appears in the movies. You cannot see through the smoke, and the lack of oxygen will swiftly overcome a person. Also, the smoke from a fire can asphyxiate you before you smell it. Don’t rely on your nose; rely on well-kept smoke detectors.

In 2002, 143 Ohio citizens lost their lives in fires. In fact, there is a home fire every 30 minutes. Kitchens are by far the largest source of residential fires with the bedroom being the second most likely place for fires to start. There were nearly 16,000 residential fires in Ohio in 2002; over 6,500 of them started in the kitchen.

When fire attacks, your home can become a death trap. Heat rises, and smoke and deadly gases can race ahead of flames, paralyzing a sleeping person.

Mistakes Cost Lives: Plan Ahead

- Plan your escape routes from each room. Drill periodically.
- Sleep with doors closed. This can help keep fire from spreading.
- Have fully functional smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
- Escape ladders for second floors are vital.

Fire Escape Planning

Make floor plans with two escape routes per room.

1. Make an outline of the entire floor area. Include furniture positions if desired.
2. Label bedrooms.
3. Locate windows, doors, and stairways. For upper floor plans, shade in any rooftop that could be used as a fire escape.
4. Go to each bedroom. Select the best window for an emergency escape.
5. Test the window to see that it works easily, especially in children’s rooms. Make sure everyone can fit through the window, and that it is low enough for easy access.
6. Use black arrows on the floor plan to show normal exits through halls or stairways.
7. Use colored arrows to show emergency exits in case these normal escape routes are blocked by fire.

Be sure everyone has at least one, preferably two, escape routes. Escape ladders should be installed on the second floor. Consider rearranging furniture to provide clear passage, or cutting an access door between bedrooms. Parents may want to put children in rooms with easy rooftop escape routes.
A fire is a terrifying experience. Without planning, a person could panic, which might spell family disaster.

Gather your family together for a short drill from time to time. This prevents panic in the few key minutes available to escape. Cover the following points:

• Always sleep with bedroom or hall doors closed. These can keep out fire long enough to allow escape through your emergency route.

• Keep smoke detectors working. Test them monthly by holding a candle close to them.

• Don’t waste time getting dressed or gathering valuables. You only have one or two minutes before succumbing to smoke inhalation.

• Test doors before opening. Put the back of your hand against the door. If it is hot, or if smoke is coming through the cracks, don’t open it. If the door is cool and seems safe, open it cautiously by bracing your shoulder against it and keeping your head to one side to avoid breathing any sudden smoke. Be ready to slam the door shut if you see smoke or heat rushes in.

• Arrange a meeting place outside. This way missing persons can be determined immediately. Never reenter a burning building. A few breaths of smoke can kill you.

• Never stand up when a fire alarm sounds. Drop to the floor and crawl to your emergency exit. Temperatures above the two-foot level could instantly burn you.

• When everyone is out, notify the fire department from a neighbor’s house. Do not call from inside a building that is on fire.

Sources
Statistics from Ohio Department of Commerce, State Fire Marshal Division.

FIRE ESCAPE INFORMATION
(Post on refrigerator)

Our outside meeting place:

________________________________________
____________________ notifies Fire Department
by phone from _____________________’s house.

Fire Department phone number:

________________________________

Fire drill schedule (every six months)

Date 1______________________
Date 2______________________
Date 3______________________
Date 4______________________

Acknowledgments to Michelle L. Wallingford for her contributions to this publication.
Reviewed by Drs. Erdal Ozkan and Harold Keener, Department of Food, Agricultural, and Biological Engineering, and Dr. Judy Wessel, Department of Family Resource Management.

Funded in whole or in part from Grant Number U05/CCU506070-03, “Cooperative Agreement Program for Agricultural Health Promotion Systems,” National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION
Visit Ohio State University Extension’s web site “Ohioline” at: http://ohioline.osu.edu

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA.

Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension
TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868

Copyright © 2008, The Ohio State University