Don’t get Burned at Home Sweet Home



What’s at Stake?

Statistics show that, on average, fire kills eight people each week in Canada, with residential fires accounting for 73% of these fatalities. In the United States, the number is six times higher, with an average of 48 people killed each week.

What’s the Danger?

Fire spreads quickly.

- **In two minutes**, a fire can become life-threatening.
- **In five minutes**, your home can be engulfed in flames.

The bigger danger is the heat and the smoke:

- Inhaling the super-hot air can sear your lungs. Fire also produces poisonous gases that make you disoriented and drowsy. So instead of being awakened by fire and smoke, you may fall into a deeper sleep.
- Asphyxiation, or smoke inhalation, is the leading cause of fire deaths, exceeding burns by a three-to-one ratio.

How to Protect Yourself

Create a fire escape plan and practice it twice a year. Some tips to consider when preparing this plan include:

- Have two ways to get out of each room. A secondary route might be a window onto a neighboring roof or a collapsible ladder for escape from upper story windows.
- Practice feeling your way out of the house in the dark or with your eyes closed.
- Make sure that windows are not stuck, screens can be taken out quickly, security bars can be quickly opened.
- Set up a meeting point at a safe distance from your home; and
- Teach children not to hide from firefighters.

A working smoke alarm significantly increases your chances of surviving a deadly home fire.

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement.
- Fire safety agencies recommend installing smoke alarms both inside and outside of sleeping areas.

- Install both ionization AND photoelectric smoke alarms, OR dual sensor smoke alarms, which contain both ionization and photoelectric smoke sensors.
- Test batteries monthly.
    - Replace batteries, except non-replaceable 10-year lithium batteries, at least once a year.
    - Replace the entire smoke alarm unit every 8-10 years or according to manufacturer’s instructions.
- And while it can be annoying, disabling a smoke alarm that is set off by cooking can be a deadly mistake.

If a fire does break out, follow these escape tips:

- When the smoke alarm sounds, get out fast.
- Crawl low under any smoke – heavy smoke and poisonous gases collect first along the ceiling.
- Before opening a door feel the doorknob and door. If either is hot, leave the door closed and use your second way out.
- If you open a door, open it slowly. Be ready to shut it quickly if heavy smoke or fire is present.
- If you can’t get out, close the door and cover vents and cracks around doors with towels, sheets or tape to keep smoke out.
    - Call 9-1-1 or your fire department.
    - Say where you are and signal for help at the window with a light-colored cloth or a flashlight.
- Lastly, don’t risk your life. If you can’t get to a person or a pet leave the home and call 9-1-1 or the fire department.
    - Tell the emergency operator where the person is located.
    - When firefighters arrive tell them right away of anyone still inside.

Final Word

Having an escape plan and working smoke alarms throughout your home are two ways you can avoid getting burned if a fire were to break out in your home.