

## Fire Emergencies

Like flooding, fires affect thousands of Americans and cause billions of dollars in damage every year. Fires, however, are often preventable. Because fires spread so quickly, they can be particularly deadly — becoming life threatening in two minutes and engulfing a residence in as little as five minutes. As the fire burns, poisonous gases are emitted that can cause you to become disoriented or drowsy. The leading cause of fire-related deaths is suffocation from lack of oxygen, outnumbering burns by three-to-one.

### How to Prepare for and Prevent a Fire Emergency

- Installing smoke alarms is the single most important step you can take to prepare for a fire. According to the PA State Fire Commissioner, properly working smoke alarms decrease your chances of dying in a fire by 50 percent.
- Place smoke alarms on every level of your residence. Place them outside bedrooms on the ceiling or high on the wall (4 to 12 inches from ceiling), at the top of open stairways or at the bottom of enclosed stairs and near (but not in) the kitchen.
- Test and clean smoke alarms once a month and replace batteries at least once a year.
- Replace smoke alarms once every 10 years.
- Make an emergency plan for you and your family. Your plan for fire emergencies should include identifying multiple escape routes from the building, identifying a meeting place and having regular fire drills.
- Make sure windows are not nailed or painted shut. Make sure you have working fire extinguishers in your residence, and teach family members how to use them.
- Have the wiring in your house checked by an electrician.
- Place heaters at least three feet away from flammable materials. Use extreme caution when using alternative heating sources, such as kerosene heaters.
- Learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by your state and local government.

### If There Is a Fire

- Get out of the building as quickly as you can. Don't waste time gathering valuables or making a phone call. Once you're out of the building, don't go back in for any reason.
- If a door feels hot, do not open it. Do not open any doors except for the ones you have to escape through.
- If there is smoke in the house, stay low to the ground as you exit to avoid inhaling potentially toxic fumes.
- Teach children not to hide under beds or in closets in the event of a fire emergency, as this will make it more difficult for firefighters to find them.

For additional information, visit [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov), <https://www.ready.gov/home-fires> or [www.pema.pa.gov](http://www.pema.pa.gov).