

Home Fire Preparedness



6 Ways to Prepare for Home Fires

According to [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov), a fire can become life threatening in just two minutes. A residence can be engulfed in flames in five minutes.

There are basic precautions you can take to prevent fires. Here are 6 ways that you can stay ready and prepare for an in-home fire:

1. Teach household members to **STOP, DROP, and ROLL** if their clothes catch on fire.

You know the drill!

If clothes catch fire: **Stop** where you are.

Drop to the ground and cover your eyes and mouth with your hands.

Roll over and over and back and forth until the flames are out.

2. Install the right number of smoke alarms.

The Red Cross recommends testing smoke detectors one a month and replacing the batteries at least once a year.

Did you know that the American Red Cross will install a **free** smoke alarm, as a part of their Sound the Alarm campaign? Find out more [here](#) (subject to local availability, US only).

3. Ensure that all household members know two ways to escape from every room of your home.

Make sure each household member knows the family meeting spot outside of your home.

The Red Cross even offers a [Home Fire Escape Plan Work Sheet](#) to help you prep. For family members with Access and Functional needs, including elderly adults, and caretakers of people with AFN, visit the [National Fire Protection Association's People with Disabilities](#) page to learn how to plan inclusive drills and evacuations.



4. Establish a family emergency communications plan

Ensure that all household members know who to contact if they cannot find one another.

Here are some steps:

- Have a list of emergency contacts (fire, police, ambulance, etc.) in your cell phone and near your home phone.
- Agree on a family meeting place, both in your neighborhood and out of town, in case you cannot get in touch or are unable to go home.
- Program “I.C.E” (in case of emergency) numbers into your phone and family members’ phones. If someone is injured, emergency personnel can use these numbers to notify friends and family.
- Prepare a [family preparedness guide](#) with the names, addresses and phone numbers of important contacts. Include an out-of-town contact for family members to get in touch with when they are unable to contact other family members. Often, during disasters, it’s easier to make long-distance calls than local calls.
- Create a contact card for each member of the family. Keep these cards in a purse, wallet or child’s backpack. Include an emergency contact name and number, an out-of-town contact name and number, a neighborhood meeting place and any other important information.
- Be sure every family member has emergency phone numbers and a cell phone.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows how to send a text message. Texts can often get around network disruptions when phone calls cannot.

5. Practice escaping from your home at least twice a year

Fires can start anywhere in the home and at any time, so run through the plan at different times of the day or night and practice different ways out.

Learn two ways out of every room in your home, in case one exit is blocked or dangerous to use. A second way out can include an escape ladder for rooms on an upper level. Practice getting low and moving to your exits in case there is smoke. Choose a safe meeting place a safe distance from your home.

6. Have a fire extinguisher

Fires can start anywhere in the home and at any time, so run through the plan at different times of the day or night and practice different ways out.

Fire extinguishers can be helpful on a small fire. Consider providing a checklist to help people prepare to use a fire extinguisher on a potential fire.

Call emergency responders if you are unsure about using a fire extinguisher. Emergency responder numbers vary based on country. In the US, dial 911. In the UK, dial 999. If you are unsure of your emergency response phone number, [consult this guide](#).

Make sure to check the expiration date on your fire extinguisher. You will want to look for a date stamp on the inspection tag first. You can also look for a date stamped on the cylinder's body.

In the event of a home fire, [FEMA](#) recommends asking the following questions:

- Have I alerted others in the building that there's a fire?
- Has someone called the fire department?
- Am I physically able to use a fire extinguisher?
- Is the fire small and contained in a single object (like a pan or a wastebasket)?
- Am I safe from the fire's toxic smoke?
- Do I have a clear escape route?