



# MSU-ES Dawg Tracks

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## Basic Fire Escape Planning



### Fires in homes are a subject that is seldom mentioned in conversation circles:

- In 2006, a person died every 162 minutes in a fire and someone else was injured every 32 minutes.
- In 2005, four of five U.S. fire deaths occurred in a home.
- In 2006, fire departments responded to 412,500 home fires in the U.S. These fires claimed the lives of 2,580 people (not including firefighters) and injured 12,925 people (not including firefighters).
- Most victims die from smoke or toxic gases, not burns.
- Smoking is the leading cause of fire-related deaths.
- Cooking is the primary cause of residential fires.

### The ability to get out of a fire depends on two items: One is having an advance plan to implement and the second is having smoke alarms:

- **Please, if you haven't taken the time already, get your family together and make some escape plans. Following are some points to include in your plan:**
  - ~Do a walk through charting all exits and possible escape routes.
  - ~Mark the location of the smoke alarms.
  - ~Download the NFPA's escape planning grid. (Available on the [nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org) web link).
- If you haven't already, install smoke alarms in every sleeping room of your house and on every level of your home. (NFPA requires interconnected smoke alarms in every room of your house).
- Once the plan is written, get the family together and do a walk through to check all openings, windows and doors.
- Choose an outside meeting place such as a neighbor's house, a street marker, a light pole or just any common point that will be familiar to the family members.
- Make sure that your house number is clearly visible on the mailbox, curb or other high profile location.
- Have family members memorize the emergency number of the fire department or make cards with the numbers on them and give a copy to each family member.
- If there are family members with mobility limitations, assign a family member to assist them in getting out of the building.
- If the home has security bars on windows and doors make sure that they have security bar releases on them and they do work.
- When you have overnight guests, be sure that you tell them about your escape plan.

By the same token, if you are the guest at another home, ask them if they have an escape route. As extra security, look around their home before bedtime and locate all routes of egress. Also ask them if you could help them to develop their own plan while you are their guest.

- **Be prepared for a real fire! When the smoke alarm goes off, get out immediately.**
- **Once you're out of the building, stay out!** Under no circumstances should you ever go back into a burning building. If a person is missing, inform the fire department dispatcher when you call. Firefighters have the skill and equipment to perform such rescues.

### IMPLEMENT THE PLAN -

- Once you have assembled the plan, orient the family with all the details, and then you should implement the plan by practicing it at least twice each year.
- Be sure in the plan that you have considered the assignment of one of the family members to be responsible for the disabled member, if there is one.
- You should consider a practice drill to be conducted at night while family members are in bed. A good idea is to warn the children that you will conduct a fire drill after they are in bed. By telling the children in advance, you won't surprise them or alarm them, but they can do go through the escape routine in a normal manner while not being alarmed.
- It's important to know if the children can hear the smoke alarms. If not, be sure to assign someone to go to each bedroom and awaken them to exit in the manner you have prescribed.
- If you have a two-story home, provisions for escape from the second floor should be considered. Have ladders placed strategically in front of a window in each of the bedrooms for egress in case the staircase is blocked. In your escape plan, practice setting up the ladders so that you know they are in a safe placement area so that egresses down the ladder will be stable and safe. It will be good to be able to store the ladders in areas close to the windows so that you don't have to look for them in the dark and in an emergency.
- When practicing the drill, alert all family members to exit with their bodies as close to the ground as possible to avoid smoke inhalation.
- Alert each member to close doors after they leave the room, as this slows down the spread of the fire.
- In the drill, implement a plan where you might be "trapped" in the fire with no exit. Use duct tape, wet towels, and wet bed clothing to block the cracks from smoke entering your safe area until you can be rescued. Immediately call the fire department to give them your exact location.

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Excerpts: <http://www.nfpa.org>

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