

Fully Involved
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Home Exit Drills Save Lives

With the start of the New Year now is a great time to work with your children on emergency exit drills and fire escape plans. Every year in the United States there are thousands of house fires, most of which occur late at night while occupants are sleeping. Teaching your children how to escape in the event of an emergency is critical. Recently flyers were sent home with all grade school children; approximately 25% of those returned did not have an exit plan, or have practiced the plan recently. Here is some important information on how to develop, initiate, and practice your families plan.

Initially you must know what a plan is and how it operates. There are three basic components to the plan. The first is evacuation from any given room. During the day most occupants are awake in your home occupying common areas such as the kitchen, living room or even game/media rooms. Knowing how to escape from those areas while critical may not be as important as sleeping areas. In sleeping areas children must know that leaving through a door may not be an option. Instruct your family members to sleep with the door closed. If a smoke alarm sounds make sure that they do not enter the hallway if the back of the door is hot. Secondary means may be necessary. This could include another door leaving the room, and in most cases a window leading to the exterior of the structure. Second story sleeping areas should be equipped with emergency ladders that can be purchased locally. If your house contains second story ladders you must ensure that occupants have been trained on their use.

After you have established two different evacuation routes from each room you must then teach you children how to evacuate. While it may be common sense to adults, children do not fully understand the concept that smoke rises. Given today's television, fire scenes, and other emergencies are greatly skewed. Children must understand that if there is smoke or fire within hallways another route must be found to exit the structure. Understanding to stay low in smoke filled areas is another must. Once occupants have exited the structure they should assemble at a pre-determined location. Having your family members pick a meeting location that is away from the house will ensure that no one is lost. The most imperative part of a home evacuation plan is teaching **never to re-enter** the house under any circumstance.

Once you have completed a plan, found two ways out of each room, and discussed where to meet, it is now time to write the plan out and practice. Children learn by repetition. The more time they see and do, the easier it is for them to remember. Making a blueprint of you home, identifying your exit routes and meeting place will allow you family to become involved in the plan. Posting this plan will serve as a reminder to practice.

Finally practice will concrete specifics of the plan into action. All documents needed to make a plan can be found on our web page at www.MCFD2.com under the “public education” tab.

More information on your Fire District, visit our web site at WWW.MCFD2.COM or call 360-275-6711.

Question of the month: How many house fire deaths were reported in 2010? The first email or phone call that I receive with the correct answer will receive a gift from Starbucks Coffee.

Jeromy Hicks is currently Mason County Fire District 2’s community outreach coordinator. With ten plus years of firefighting service including being a paramedic, fire prevention is his passion. Jeromy currently provides assistance with inspections, investigations, and education though out Mason County. He can be reached at 360-275-6711 ext. 2.