

Basic Fire Escape Plan

Mass health requires we will conduct an annual home inspection and do periodic fire drills and review the fire/disaster safety plan. We keep a copy of your plan on file. Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms need to be checked and batteries maintained. First aid kits should be maintained as well as a fire extinguisher easily available near the kitchen stove.

Your ability to get out depends on advance warning from smoke alarms and advance planning.

Pull together everyone in your household and make a plan. Walk through your home and inspect all possible exits and escape routes. Households with children should consider drawing a floor plan of your home, marking two ways out of each room, including windows and doors. Also, mark the location of each smoke alarm. This is a great way to get members involved in fire safety in a non-threatening way. Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. Everyone in the household must understand the escape plan. When you walk through your plan, check to make sure the escape routes are clear and doors and windows can be opened easily.

Choose an outside meeting place (i.e., neighbor's house, a light post, mailbox, or stop sign) a safe distance in front of your home where everyone can meet after they've escaped. Make sure to mark the location of the meeting place on your escape plan. Go outside to see if your street number is clearly visible from the road. If not, paint it on the curb or install house numbers to ensure that responding emergency personnel can find your home. Have everyone who is able memorize the emergency phone number of the fire department. That way any member of the household can call from a neighbor's home or a cellular phone once safely outside. If there are infants, older adults, or clients with mobility limitations, make sure that someone is assigned to assist them in the fire drill and in the event of an emergency. Assign a backup person too, in case the designee is not home during the emergency. Notify your local fire department if there is someone with a disability that makes it difficult to get out of the house. If windows or doors in your home have security bars, make sure that the bars have emergency release devices inside so that they can be opened immediately in an emergency. Emergency release devices won't compromise your security - but they will increase your chances of safely escaping a home fire. Tell guests or visitors to your home about your family's fire escape plan. When staying overnight at other people's homes, ask about their escape plan. Be fully prepared for a real fire: when a smoke alarm sounds, get out immediately. Residents of high-rise and apartment buildings may be safer "defending in place." Once you're out, stay out! Under no circumstances should you ever go back into a burning building. If someone is missing, inform the fire department dispatcher when you call. Firefighters have the skills and equipment to perform rescues.

Putting your fire plan to the test

Practice your home fire escape plan periodically, making the drill as realistic as possible. We will be practicing a fire drill with you. Make arrangements in your plan for anyone in your home who has a disability.

Always choose the escape route that is safest the one with the least amount of smoke and heat but be prepared to escape under toxic smoke if necessary. When you do your fire drill, everyone in the family should practice getting low and going under the smoke to your exit. Closing doors on your way out slows the spread of fire, giving you more time to safely escape.

In some cases, smoke or fire may prevent you from exiting your home or apartment building. To prepare for an emergency like this, practice "sealing yourself in for safety" as part of your home fire escape plan. Close all doors between you and the fire. Use duct tape or towels to seal the door cracks and cover air vents to keep smoke from coming in. If possible, open your windows at the top and bottom so fresh air can get in. Call the fire department to report your exact location. Wave a flashlight or light-colored cloth at the window to let the fire department know where you are located.