

Escape Planning Tips for Older Adults



Making a home fire escape plan for yourself and/or the older adults in your household means making plans for your abilities and your home environment:

- Reduce the risk of trips/falls during an escape by removing clutter in the hallways, stairways, and near exits/windows for a clear, safe path out of your home. Make sure all windows and doors can be opened in an emergency.
- If you use a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to be sure you can fit through the doorways.
- Keep your walker, scooter, cane, or wheelchair by your bed/where you sleep to make sure you can reach it quickly.
- Keep your eyeglasses, mobile phone, and a flashlight by your bed/where you sleep to be able to reach them quickly in an emergency.
- Consider sleeping in a room on the ground floor to make emergency escape easier.
- If you cannot escape safely, keep your door shut, place a towel or blanket at the bottom of the door and stand near the window where fire personnel can reach you. At night, you can also use a flashlight to shine out the window to alert emergency personnel. Call 911 to let the fire department know you are inside the home.
- If you are deaf, hearing impaired, or have trouble hearing, install a bedside alert such as a bed shaker alarm that works with your smoke alarm to alert you of a fire. Strobe light alarms can be added to your smoke alarms for a visual alert. These can be found online or in most retail and hardware stores.
- For people who are visually impaired or blind, the sound of the smoke alarm can become disorienting in an emergency. Practice the escape plan with the sound of the alarm to become familiar with, and practice with the extra noise.
- If you have a service animal, agree on a plan to keep the animal with you during an emergency.
- When looking for an apartment or high-rise home, look for one with an automatic sprinkler system.
- For people with cognitive disabilities, work with healthcare providers and the local fire department to make a plan that works for their needs.
- Make your fire escape plan together with your caregiver and other family members who live/spend time in your home.
- Many Fire Departments keep a directory of people who need extra help. Call your fire department to let them know who in your home may need extra help/may not be able to escape safely.