



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

### **Are home fires a big problem in the United States?**

Sadly, yes. Last year, the Red Cross responded to more than 74,000 disasters, 93 percent of them were fire-related. This is a devastating fact since many home fires can be prevented.

### **Are home fires increasing?**

Unfortunately, yes. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that residential fires across the country have increased 8 percent since 2000, and the average cost of damages from a home fire during 2006 was more than \$17,000. The Red Cross response to home fires has increased as well, rising 10 percent since 2000.

### **When do home fires happen?**

Home fires can happen at any time, but they generally increase during the fall and winter, with December and January being the peak months. Home fires are also more common on Saturday and Sunday, and tend to peak between 6:00 and 7:00 PM.

### **Where are home fires most likely to start?**

Home fires are more likely to start in the kitchen than any other room in the home. The second leading cause of home fires are heating sources like wood stoves, and fireplaces. Fires caused by smoking are the leading cause of deaths.

### **Who are affected by home fires?**

Home fires don't discriminate and can affect any home at any time. However, children under five and adults over 65 face the highest risk of dying in a home fire.

### **How can I prepare for a potential home fire?**

Smoke alarms are a critical step in being prepared for a home fire. Smoke alarms should be installed outside each sleeping area and on each level of your home. If you and your family sleep with the doors closed, install smoke alarms inside sleeping areas, too.

### **My home has a smoke alarm, is that all I need to do?**

No, to function properly, smoke alarms must be maintained. In 2005, the NFPA reported that 74 percent of home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. Once a month you should use the test button to check each smoke alarm. And at least once a year, all smoke alarm batteries should be replaced. In addition, smoke alarms can become less sensitive over time and should be replaced at least every 10 years.

### **If I have a fire extinguisher in my home, do I need training to use it?**

Yes. Fire extinguishers are a great tool, but like any tool you need to learn how to use them properly and safely. Using a

fire extinguisher on even small fires takes practice and quick thinking so there is not a delay in calling 9-1-1. The Red Cross suggests learning how to properly use fire extinguishers by contacting your local fire department to get training.

### **Why do I need a fire escape plan?**

Fires can ignite very quickly and without warning, leaving you and your loved ones with little or no time to escape. By creating and practicing an escape plan, family members can save valuable time in the event of a fire by knowing exactly how to act.

### **How can I create a fire escape plan?**

Begin by determining at least two ways to escape from every room of your home. For floors above ground level, escape ladders should be stored near the window. Also, make sure to select a central location at a safe distance from your home where family members can meet after escaping. After creating and discussing your plan with all members of your household, the Red Cross recommends that you practice your plan at least twice a year.

### **If a fire happens, can I go back into my home if I've forgotten something?**

Once you are out of a burning home, stay out! Call the fire department from a neighbor's home or cell phone.

### **What if my escape route is covered in smoke?**

If you see smoke or fire in your first escape route, use your second way out. If you must exit through smoke, crawl low under the smoke. If you are escaping through a closed door, feel the door before opening it. If it is warm, use your second way out. If smoke, heat, or flames block your exit routes, stay in the room with the door closed. Place a rolled towel underneath the door. Open the window- but do not break it. Signal for help waving a brightly colored cloth or shining a flashlight at the window. If there is a phone in the room, call the fire department and tell them your exact location.

### **How can I help victims of home fires?**

The number of families that the American Red Cross supports in the aftermath of home fires has increased 10 percent since 2000. Your local Red Cross chapter depends on the generous support of community members like you to help our neighbors affected by home fires. You can help victims of home fires by ensuring your local Red Cross is ready to respond. Contact your local chapter to make a financial contribution today.

### **How can I learn more about fire preparedness?**

Visit [www.redcross.org/homefires](http://www.redcross.org/homefires) or contact your local Red Cross chapter.