



Macomb Township Fire Department

Fire and Life Safety Tips

February 2010

Teaching Fire Safety to Your Children

The most important job of a parent is to see to the health and welfare of their children. A startling statistic from the United States Fire Administration states that children under the age of five are twice as likely to die in a house fire when compared with the rest of the population. Children need to know important fire safety tips. The best teachers of life lessons may be you as parents. So what should you teach them?

With any lesson, age and maturity makes a difference. Infants cannot protect themselves. It is up to the adults in their lives to make wise choices to keep them safe. We at the Macomb Township Fire Department will be glad to provide a free fire safety evaluation of your home. We can also assist with creating your family's escape plan in case of a fire and plan of preparedness in case of other emergencies. Evaluate your older children to see if they are ready to learn *Fire Safety Lessons 101*.

CHAPTER 1 – KNOWING WHAT TO DO

The most important thing for your child to know is that if there is a fire in the house, everyone must **GET OUT!** Every other lesson is built off of this simple premise. Getting out is for everyone – including the adults. This means:

- No hiding
- No gathering material possessions
- No “checking it out first”
- No unskilled attempts at fire fighting



Getting out may require crawling low under the smoke. Practice twice a year. There is no need to scare the children unnecessarily. Try to make it fun. Turn off the lights and push the button on the smoke alarm. See if they can beat their previous time of rolling out of the bed to the floor, feeling the door to see if it is hot, peeking out and crawling quickly to the nearest and most familiar exit.

To be able to do this lesson and keep your children safe – they should sleep with their door closed all the way. Fatal poisons travel in the smoke. Leaving the door open gives these fatal

poisons an unabated path to your child. You as a parent must participate with them and let them know you think this is important. Your children need your help to be able to complete the other chapters.

CHAPTER 2 – HEY MOE, WHICH WAY DO WE GO?

Pre-designate an emergency meeting place for the family. Insist that all family members go to this outdoor emergency meeting place and wait for other family members. The meeting place should be at a permanent landmark – tree in the front yard, mailbox or neighbor’s porch, etc.

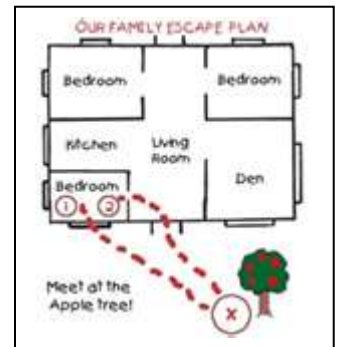
Regardless of the place selected it must be outside. It may not be possible to gather everyone together before exiting the home. Fire and smoke moves fast. It is nothing like the way it is depicted on television and movies.

CHAPTER 3 – BUT WHAT IF...?

Question: *But what if* the first route of escape chosen is blocked by intense heat, smoke or fire?

Answer: Plan for two escape routes from each room and from your home. This may require maintenance prior to an event to assure windows are accessible and able to be opened easily. This is why basement bedrooms are extremely dangerous. In most cases, a second route of escape is not available.

Or, you may have to shelter-in-place. Teach your children how to use clothes or blankets to block any smoke or gases from seeping under their door. Then go to the window and get attention. If it is a one-story home, evaluate the maturity of your child to decide if it is proper to teach them how to exit safely from a window. Escape ladders are available for purchase for larger homes (Tying sheets together is a movie thing). The bottom line is that windows should be thought of a second or third choice. The first choice should be the most familiar route taken out of the home each and every day. This is the one you could do blindfolded, because you may just have to do it that way. Smoke may completely obscure your vision.



Question: *But what if* I leave my dog, cat, hamster, goldfish, Nintendo Wii, etc?

Answer: Children should be taught that nothing is more important than they are. Everything can be replaced except for them. This may be a good time to talk about keeping the entire family safe by *not* having a fire. You can explain the measures you have taken and the ones you will continue to take. This discussion should include their promise to never play with anything that can start a fire. Quite simply: No fire, no problem.

CHAPTER 4 – SMOKE ALARMS



We already talked about sleeping with bedroom doors completely closed. Other precautions must include early detection. Children need to be taught what a smoke alarm is and what it does. Let them hear the sound of all the detectors in the home.

Both ionization and photoelectric technology smoke alarms should be installed throughout your home. According to both the National Fire Protection Association and the United States Fire Administration, these two types of smoke alarms should be installed at a minimum on every level, outside of the sleeping areas and inside each bedroom where someone sleeps.

Ask older children to help you remember that smoke alarms should be tested every month. You can have them remind you on their favorite number that corresponds with a date in the month. Batteries need to be changed at least once a year for regular batteries. Did you know they now make 10-year lithium batteries?

Teach your young ones the Four S's when it comes to fire safety. If they **See Something** wrong, they should **Say Something**. This includes telling an adult if they see someone playing with matches or lighters. Remind them it is O.K. to yell "FIRE" when there is a fire.

CHAPTER 5 – BURN PREVENTION

Children should not have access to things that make a fire. These things should be treated like the dangerous tool they are. Having a relaxed attitude could result in the permanent disfigurement or death of your child. Lighters do not belong in or on purses, tables, drawers, coat pockets, counters, etc. when children live in or visit the home. Yes, you as an adult should be inconvenienced in the name of safety for a child. Children also should be taught not to touch these tools.



Stop-drop and roll works if clothes are on fire. Remind kids that if their clothes are on fire, they are on fire! It may re-enforce the "don't play with matches and lighters" lesson. Have them practice carefully lying down with their hands covering their face and rolling completely over and over.

If you have any questions, give us a call. We are happy to help (586) 286-0027.



REFERENCES

Macomb Township Fire Department Fire and Life Safety Initiative

National Fire Protection Association

United States Fire Administration