

Opinion: Important to have 2 escape routes

By Teri Mizuhara

Knowing two ways out of every room in your home may save your life during a house fire.

“It’s not just knowing two ways out of your home, typically that is easy, but do you have two ways out of every room in your home and can you safely use each exit?” asks Unit Chief Kelly Keenan of the Amador-El Dorado Unit of CalFire.

Keenan adds, “If not, then you need to create a plan, share this plan with everyone living in your home, and most importantly, practice your plan with your family during daylight hours and in the middle of the night since 50 percent of fatal home fires occur between 10pm and 6am.”

Here’s how to begin:

Sketch a floor plan of your home and indicate with arrows two ways out of every room.

Have a flashlight or headlamp next to each bed in case you need to exit your home in the dark.

Walk through the plan with everyone you live with including visitors.

Make sure you have one “meeting place” for everyone to go to after they have exited the home. Never go back inside a burning home for anything, leave that to the firefighters.

Call 911 once you are outside the burning building, calling from inside the home wastes valuable time that you need to escape.

Purchase escape ladders if you have a two- or three-story home and know how to use them safely.

Post your plan in a prominent place such as your refrigerator door.

Practice your plan during the day and again at night. Do this a minimum of twice a year.

If you have small children, disabled or elderly individuals, make sure you have a plan for their escape. Add ramps and other equipment if necessary. Several years ago an 83 year old woman died of her injuries because she could not safely escape from a house fire. She used a walker and had no ramps to the deck off her bedroom, so she was forced to walk through her home which was on fire. Firefighters found her deceased outside her home.

Keep in mind, small children often hide when they get scared, so practice the exit drill more often so that they are comfortable with the idea. Don't forget to crawl low under smoke while exiting your home, sleep with doors closed, have a smoke detector in each bedroom, in main hallways and on each floor.

For more information please visit CalFire's website or call (530) 644.2345 to receive free fire and life safety information.

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