

FACTS ABOUT FIRE

While the number of fire-related deaths in the United States has been cut by 50 percent since the introduction of smoke alarms in the 1970s, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA®), the United States fire death rate remains one of the highest per capita in the industrialized world (U.S. Fire Administration).

While 96 percent of Americans have at least one smoke alarm in their home (NFPA®), many people mistakenly believe they'd be awakened by the smell of smoke in time to escape. Clinical experiments have found that the sense of smell actually lessens when people are asleep. Therefore, when smoke enters a room, it does not always awaken the individual. In addition, smoke disorients people and dulls the senses, making it less likely that other cues, such as cries for help, will awaken them. This is why working smoke alarms are so important (NFPA®, International Association of Fire Chiefs and Sense of Smell Institute®).

These and other statistics from several leading sources on fire safety are highlighted below:

Fire Risks and Fatalities

- In the United States, roughly 80 percent of fire deaths result from fires in homes without working smoke alarms. (*National Fire Protection Association*)
- If a fire occurs, working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in a home fire nearly in half, by providing an early warning and critical extra seconds to escape. (*National Fire Protection Association*)
- Somewhere in the nation, a home fire occurs approximately every three hours. (*National Fire Protection Association*)
- In 2005, fires killed 3,105 people, most of them in the home (83 percent). An additional 15,325 civilians were injured in fires in the United States in 2005. (*U.S. Fire Administration*)
- Each year, fire kills more Americans than all natural disasters combined. (*U.S. Fire Administration*)
- The United States has the highest fire death rate in the industrialized world. (*National Fire Protection Association*)
- Seventy percent of all home fire fatalities occur in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. (*National Fire Protection Association*)
- A fire can double in size every 30 seconds. (*U.S. Fire Administration*)

Who Is at Risk?

- Eighty percent of fatal home fire victims who were children were killed by fires in homes without working smoke alarms. (*National Fire Protection Association*)
- On average, three children under the age of 20 die in a residential fire every day. An additional 4,200 are injured in home fires every year. (*National Fire Protection Association*)
- Children under the age of five are twice as likely as the rest of the population to die in a home fire. (*National Fire Protection Association*)

- Senior citizens and children are at twice the risk of dying in a home fire. *(National Fire Protection Association)*
- Adults ages 65 and older are twice as likely than the average population to die in a home fire; those ages 75 and older are three times more likely to die in a home fire and those 85 years and older are up to 4.5 times more likely to die in a home fire. Many older adults need assistance to walk and cannot escape by themselves. *(National Fire Protection Association)*

Where Fires Occur

- The peak time for home fire fatalities is between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. *(National Fire Protection Association)*
- Fire deaths peak in December through February when smoking materials and poorly installed, poorly maintained or misused portable heaters are used. Heating equipment is the leading cause of fatal home fires. *(National Fire Protection Association)*
- Cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. It is also the leading cause of fire injuries. *(U.S. Fire Administration)*
- Flaming cooking materials are involved more than five times more frequently than other materials in fire incidents. *(National Institute for Standards and Technology)*
- Over 25 percent of fires in one- and two-family dwellings start in the kitchen; another 13 percent of fires start in the bedroom. *(U.S. Fire Administration)*

The Impact of Fire-Safety Education

- Ninety-six percent of homes in the United States have at least one smoke alarm. *(National Fire Protection Association)*
- The National Fire Alarm Code[®] recommends a minimum of one smoke alarm on each level of a home, including one inside each bedroom for new construction and one outside each sleeping area. *(National Fire Protection Association)*
- A majority of deaths that occur in homes with smoke alarms (60 percent) are a result of dead or missing batteries. *(U.S. Fire Administration)*
- Only one in four families has actually developed and practiced a home fire escape plan. *(National Fire Protection Association)*
- In the early 1970s, the cost of protecting a three-bedroom home with professionally installed alarms was approximately \$1,000. Today, the cost of owner-installed alarms in the same house has dropped to as little as \$10 per alarm, or less than \$50 for the entire home. *(U.S. Fire Administration)*

To learn more about protecting your family from smoke and fire, visit

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