

# The Great Escape

Tacoma Fire Prevention Bureau 3471 S. 35th St. Tacoma WA, 98409

## The Great Escape

When the building fire alarm sounds what do you do? A fire can quickly fill the halls of your building with smoke and poisonous gases, making them dark and dangerous, especially if you do not know what to do. Having a home fire escape plan is an important part of your safety when a fire starts. The following checklist will help you make a home fire escape plan.

### Fire Escape Planning.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Be sure everyone knows two ways out of every bedroom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sleep with bedroom doors closed. This will protect you from smoke traveling through your home.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be sure windows open easily from the inside, allowing for a speedy escape.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Never use the elevator in the event of a fire emergency. If you are unable to use the stairs to evacuate wait in your apartment and call 911.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Designate a meeting place where everyone in your family can meet once outside.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Call 9-1-1 from a safe phone once outside.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make certain everyone understands that once out of the building no one is to re-enter without the permission of the fire department.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have working Smoke Alarms.

### Alternative Escape Evacuation

When stairs are required for emergency exit, those persons unable to use stairs need to have a special fire emergency plan. The following fire evacuation guidelines are provided for individuals in buildings which do not have designated areas of evacuation assistance

#### Residential

Occupants of residential buildings may use their apartment or living unit as an area of refuge. During a fire emergency, occupants unable to use exit stairs should stay in their unit with the door shut and wait for help from fire department personnel.

Residents who choose to stay in their units should be identified to the responding fire fighters immediately upon their arrival. One way this can be done is by maintaining a roster at the fire alarm panel of residents who plan to stay in their rooms. This roster is then provided to the fire fighters upon their arrival.

#### Non-residential

In the event that a fire alarm is activated or a fire emergency occurs, those persons unable to use exit stairs will need to find an area of refuge on the floor they are on. They should then wait in the area of refuge for assistance from arriving fire fighters. Each floor of a building is likely to have multiple places that may serve as an area of refuge during a fire emergency. An ideal area of refuge would be an enclosed room—near an exit stairwell—that has a door, a window and a telephone. Examples would be an office, a conference room or a classroom located close to an exit stairwell. The door, (when closed) provides a barrier to smoke which may be present in the building. The window offers a second route of emergency exit once firefighters arrive. The telephone provides a backup method of calling for assistance.

#### Survival Rules

Once you have reached your chosen area of refuge, observe the following survival rules:

- \* Keep the door to the room closed. A closed door is a barrier to smoke.
- \* Use towels or clothing to block openings around doors or vents where smoke might enter.
- \* Place a signal in the window. The signal can be anything that will call attention to your location.
- \* If smoke or fire enters your unit, call 9-1-1 to report your location.
- \* Stay low to the floor to breathe the best air. Put a wet cloth over your mouth or nose. It is not advisable to open or break windows. Smoke from the outside of the building can enter through open windows. Breaking windows will put you at great risk to smoke entering from the outside and will hamper rescue efforts below.

**For More Information Contact:**  
**Tacoma Fire Department**  
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