

## Put Fire Escape Planning and Practice at the Top of Your Holiday To-Do List

SOUTHERN PINES, NC, December 1, 2017 — You've done all the cooking, cleaning, shopping and decorating for your holiday guests. Now you can kick back and put your feet up, right? Not just yet. According to the Southern Pines Fire Department, there's one very important item that needs to be checked off every holiday to-do list: a fire escape plan with practice.

"You may be familiar with your escape plan, but your guests also need to know how to get out and where to go if there's a fire," says Fire Chief Mike Cameron. "This is especially important with older guests, who may have difficulty moving quickly. There's no time to waste if a fire starts. You may have less than three minutes to get out of your home."

Be prepared before a fire starts. Think about your guests' abilities, and make an escape plan around them. Older adults may move more slowly or have trouble hearing a smoke alarm because of hearing loss. Plan for this.

Here's what to do when your guests arrive:

- Make a plan. Talk about what you should do if a fire occurs. Include what each person will need to do to get out safely. Help everyone understand that fire is fast and smoke is a poison that kills.
- Think about the needs of your guests. If someone uses a cane or wheelchair, decide who will help him or her get out. If someone uses a hearing aid or eyeglasses, be sure that these items are kept next to the bed.
- Make sure that you have a working smoke alarm on every level of your home. Put alarms inside and outside all sleeping areas. Test your smoke alarms to make sure that they work. Make sure that everyone can hear the smoke alarm sound. Without a smoke alarm, you may not wake up, and the poisonous smoke can kill you in your sleep.
- Find two ways out of every room. Knowing two exits is important in case one is blocked or dangerous to use. Know how to open doors and windows that lead outside.
- Know where to meet outside your home. If the smoke alarm sounds, go outside. Call 911 from the outside meeting place.
- Practice your plan. Everyone should be included. Walk through the steps that you will take if the smoke alarm sounds. Make sure that everyone knows what to do to get out safely.



"Older adults are more likely to die in home fires," says Fire Chief Mike Cameron. "They may need help to escape a fire. By planning ahead and planning around their abilities, you can make your holiday gathering a safer one."

For additional fire safety information, <http://www.southernpines.net/130/Fire>, <https://www.facebook.com/TOSP.FD/>, and/or contact SPFD at 910-692-2720.