

A woman wearing a yellow and black firefighter helmet and a brown jacket with reflective yellow and silver stripes. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a wooden structure and a tire.

ABBY MCCULLEY

A close-up view of a firefighter's helmet and breathing apparatus. The helmet is black with a silver face shield and a yellow air intake. The breathing apparatus is black with a red valve. The firefighter is wearing a brown jacket with reflective yellow and silver stripes.

A SALUTE TO OUR FIREFIGHTERS

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Volunteer firefighters – the view from home

RACHEL AUBERGER

Staff Writer

With over 90 percent of White County's firefighters being volunteers, families often see their husbands, dads, wives, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters walk out of the house to risk their lives for members of a community they have vowed to serve, leaving a plethora of emotions behind them at home.

"There's always a sense of pride when he gets called out. I'm so glad he's got a servant heart and willing to serve where he's needed. But it does also come with some worry, too," Ashley Brandes, whose husband, Tyler Brandes, is a volunteer firefighter with Hickory Valley Fire Department, said. "You never know what each call will entail."

Jessica McCulley, whose 17-year-old daughter is following her father's footsteps and is now joining Andy McCulley as a volunteer firefighter with North End Volunteer Fire Department, agrees with Brandes that each call comes with a lot of uncertainty.

"The emotions are hard. I spend lots of time praying for protection," Jessica McCulley said.

Jessica McCulley said daytime calls are not as hard. Her other two daughters at home keep her busy and help her put the thoughts of all that could go wrong out of her head.

"But the middle of the night calls are hard - lots of sleepless nights and thoughts," she said. "I have to trust the Lord and know that he has heard prayers and goes before my husband and daughter with a hedge of protection."

But like Brandes, Jessica McCulley also feels a sense of pride when she sees her husband and daughter eager to respond when a call comes.

"I am very proud of them being so willing to serve our community. I have to remind myself my fearful emotions are selfish," she said. "God gave my husband and daughter this life to serve, and, when someone else's family needs them, it could be life or death if they respond or not. I always want to cheer and encourage them to keep running calls and serving our community."

For Jessica McCulley, there is a little more anxiety in watching her daughter walk out the door than there was when it was just her husband responding to

fire and emergency calls.

"My first thought was a proud moment. She has a heart to serve. She has never known anything other than serving," she said about her daughter telling her she was going to volunteer. "Then my next wave of emotions were fear and uncertainty...she has asthma. Now if things go wrong not only could I lose my husband but now my daughter...can I handle that? Will the other firemen be respectful to her?"

Brandes hasn't experienced having a child walk out the door to head to a burning house or car yet, but she knows that time may be coming.

"[My youngest] has always been enthralled with fire trucks since a very young age. I can see him wanting to help with the fire department when he gets older," she said of her now middle-schooler. "I hope my boys see their father giving of his time, energy, and resources to his community. He sincerely wants to make it the best that it can be. I want my boys to know that it's important to not just take but to give back too."

Jessica McCulley, too, said she hopes her children see their father giving and serving others and develop a heart to serve instead of wanting to be served. "I hope they see the love and passion he has to help others even when it is a sacrifice for his own family."

Both families hope the communities they live in understand the sacrifices that are made by all of the volunteers and support the efforts they make to keep their neighbors safe.

"I want the community to know that it's important to support all our local rescue agencies - rescue squad and volunteer fire departments," Ashley Brandes said. "The county funds keep the doors open, but the fundraisers are how they operate on a daily basis providing gear and lifesaving equipment. More than 90 percent of the firefighters in white county are volunteers, and, without these local men and women dedicated to answering these calls we wouldn't have any fire protection. Many train for hours, give up nights and weekends and time with their families all for their communities."

Ashley McCulley said she doesn't think the majority of White County community members understand what a resource the volunteer firefighters are.



"Most people know little to nothing about how lucky White County is to have volunteer fire departments," she said. "They help keep homeowners' insurance down. The volunteers are just that: volunteers. No one is doing it for money. They spend countless hours in training away from their families to be certified to volunteer to protect other families. To be honest, most volunteers are serving in gear that is not fully protecting them due to the age of the gear...but they cannot afford to keep the gear up to date. Equipment and gear to service the community is expensive."

Ashley Brandes agreed that the resources to keep her husband and the volunteers who stand beside him at every call have to come from the community, and that means fundraising and asking for donations on a regular basis.

"It also takes so much for a community resource to keep running," she said, giving credit to the community that supports her husband and his department. "The Hickory Valley Fire Department would not be possible if it wasn't for ALL of the community members."

Jessica McCulley said the fundrais-

ing is a way that she and her younger daughters can support her husband and oldest daughter, and it is a way for her to teach her younger daughters to serve as well. "This is something we do as a family. My kids have all grown up just knowing this is part of our life. Countless hours at the station doing a fundraiser or whatever the case is. We do it together."

"Please support your local volunteer fire department. They need financial support. You might think the amount you could give is not enough, but, honestly, every dollar matters," McCulley encouraged. "I challenge every family to find a way to give \$10 every month to their local fire department. That is only \$120 a year, but it would make such a huge impact if every household would do this."

Both women know the calls will keep coming, their loved ones will keep rushing out the door to save lives and homes and families, and they also know that, despite the worry and the anxiety and the time it takes from their families they wouldn't have it any other way. Because in White County, community is family and serving is a way of life.



(Left) Life Force medical helicopter assists White County firefighters with training. Pictured are Bobby Davenport, Tyler Brandes, David Moyer, Dustin Garrell, Mason Brock, and one unidentified individual. (Right) Tyler Brandes and Gov. Bill Haslam.



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OCTOBER IS FIRE PREVENTION MONTH

RACHEL AUBERGER
contributor

October is known as Fire Prevention Month, and local fire officials are stepping up to issue reminders and safety tips to help residents keep their homes and workspaces safe.

Sparta Fire Chief Kirk Young said that the National Fire Protection Association recommends that homes have smoke alarms installed inside every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement. According to those guidelines a two-story, three-bedroom house should have a minimum of five smoke alarms installed and working at all times.

"Test your smoke alarms every month," Young advised, "and if they aren't working, change the batteries."

Young also said that it was important to have a fire escape plan and that all family members knew and understood

the plan.

"It is actually recommended that you practice the plan twice a year," he added, while the National Fire Protection Association estimates that in a typical home fire, residents may have as little as one to two minutes to escape safely from the time the smoke alarm sounds.

Statistics show that frequently fires start in the kitchen, and the National Fire Protection Association chose 2020 to focus on that and issued the following statement:

We need to remember not to leave the stove or oven unattended while cooking. It's also important not to leave items near a flame, or anything that may easily catch fire.

Young added that it's important to not leave children unattended in the kitchen, "Be careful with kids. They need to be supervised when cooking or around any open flame."

Young also added some advice for

routine home maintenance that can help prevent house fires.

"Have your chimney checked by a licensed, reliable contractor each year for buildup," he advised. "The walls inside your chimney can become corroded and the soot builds up causing chimney fires that can become very dangerous quickly."

The National Fire Protection Association has also included a few facts in their campaign to keep residents aware of the dangers of home fires:

- Fire is FAST! In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can turn into a major fire.
- Fire is HOT! If you inhale the super-hot air in a home fire, it will scorch your lungs.
- Fire is DEADLY! The odorless, colorless fumes from a home fire can lull you into a deep sleep. You may not wake up in time to escape.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking. Never leave cooking unattended.
- Wear tight-fitting clothing when cooking. Loose fitting clothing can easily catch

fire.

- Keep pot handles facing inward so pans can't get knocked to the floor.
 - Teach children to stay 3-feet away from the stove.
 - Put a lid on stovetop fires. Keep a pot lid handy when cooking to smother stovetop fires. Then turn off the stove.
 - Never use water or a fire extinguisher on a grease fire. Water and extinguishers can spread the fire. Put a lid on a stovetop fires.
 - Keep things that can burn (paper, pot holders, towels, plastic bags) away from the stove.
 - For oven or microwave fires, keep the door closed, turn off the appliance and call the fire department.
- "We can all keep some important safety tips in mind when it comes to preventing a fire," Young said, "but if a fire does start in your home, get out and stay out. Call for help. Don't attempt to go back inside for anything or anyone."



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How to make a Home Fire Escape Plan



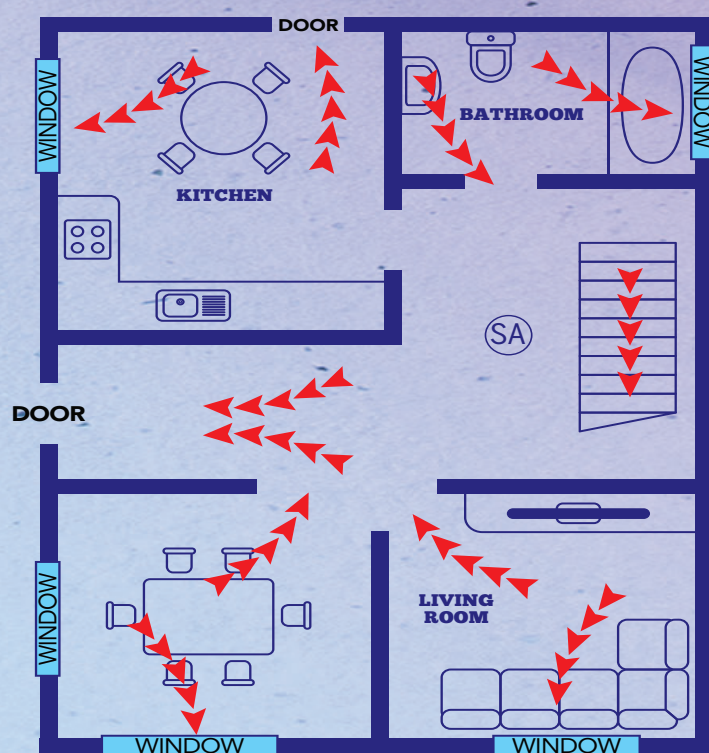
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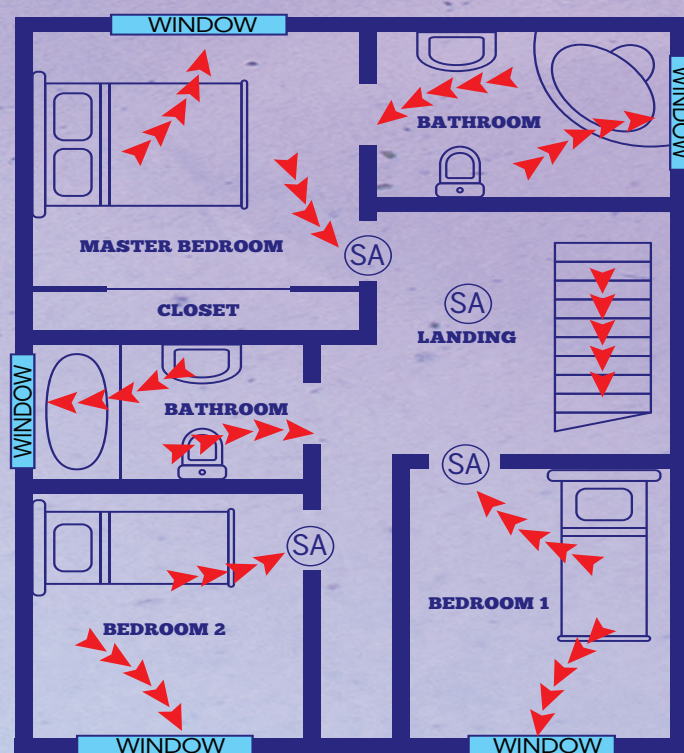
Visit Sparky.org for more activities!

- Draw a map of your home. Show all doors and windows.
- Visit each room. Find two ways out.
- All windows and doors should open easily. You should be able to use them to get outside.
- Make sure your home has smoke alarms. Push the test button to make sure each alarm is working.
- Pick a meeting place outside. It should be in front of your home. Everyone will meet at the meeting place.
- Make sure your house or building number can be seen from the street.
- Talk about your plan with everyone in your home.
- Learn the emergency phone number for your fire department.
- Practice your home fire drill!
- Make your own home fire escape plan using the grid provided on page 2.

Sample Escape Plan



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2nd FLOOR



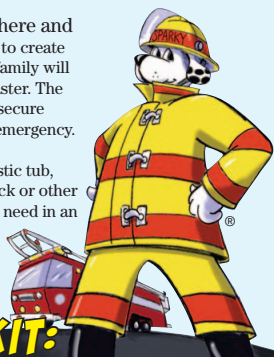
Kids

GET READY!

EMERGENCY SUPPLIES KIT:

Disasters can happen anywhere and at any time. By taking the time to create an emergency supplies kit, your family will be prepared in the event of a disaster. The kit also helps children feel more secure knowing it is there in case of an emergency.

The supplies can be kept in a plastic tub, small suitcase, trash can, backpack or other container. To learn what else you need in an emergency supplies kit, go to www.ready.gov.



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- Water – one gallon per person per day for drinking and sanitation — store 3-day supply
- Ready-to-eat food, canned juices, comfort/stress foods — at least a 3-day supply
- Battery-powered or hand-cranked radio and a NOAA weather radio, and extra batteries for both
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Non-prescription drugs such as pain reliever, anti-diarrhea medication, antacid, laxative
- Prescription medications, contact lenses and supplies, denture needs
- Whistle to signal for help
- Infant formula and diapers, if you have an infant
- Water and pet food if you have pets
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Dust mask or cotton t-shirt to filter the air
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food
- Aluminum foil
- A jacket or coat, hat and gloves
- A complete change of clothing including long pants, long sleeve shirt, and sturdy shoes stored in a waterproof container.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Rain gear
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Paper towels
- Tent
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Personal hygiene items
- Soap
- Disinfectant and household chlorine bleach
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container. Remember to include emergency contact numbers.
- Passport, bank account numbers, credit card account numbers and companies
- Books, games puzzles, portable music device

NOTE: Replace food every six months. Re-think your kit and family needs once a year. Replace batteries and update clothes, etc.

My Personal Pack Checklist

Have children create their personal pack. Have them include things like their favorite book or stuffed animal. These familiar things will help keep them comfortable during an emergency.

- ✓ Change of clothes
- ✓ Blanket
- ✓ Books
- ✓ Favorite toy
- ✓ Paper, pencils and crayons



Cooking Safety

Cooking brings family and friends together, provides an outlet for creativity and can be relaxing. But did you know that cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home injuries? By following a few safety tips you can prevent these fires.

"COOK WITH CAUTION"

- Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol don't use the stove or stovetop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stovetop.

If you have a small (grease) cooking fire and decide to fight the fire...

- On the stovetop, smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turning off the burner. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.

If you have any doubt about fighting a small fire...

- Just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire.
- Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number from outside the home.



Cooking and Kids

Have a "kid-free zone" of at least 3 feet (1 metre) around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.

FACTS

- ❗ The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.
- ❗ Most cooking fires in the home involve the kitchen stove.



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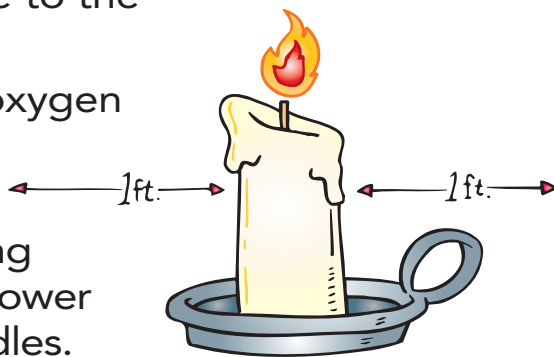


FACTS

- ❗ **December** is the peak month for home candle fires.
- ❗ More than **one-third** of home candle fires started in the bedroom.
- ❗ **Three of every five** candle fires start when things that can burn are too close to the candle.

IF YOU DO BURN CANDLES, make sure that you...

- Use candle holders that are sturdy, and won't tip over easily.
- Put candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface.
- Light candles carefully. Keep your hair and any loose clothing away from the flame.
- Don't burn a candle all the way down — put it out before it gets too close to the holder or container.
- Never use a candle if oxygen is used in the home.
- Have flashlights and battery-powered lighting ready to use during a power outage. Never use candles.



FIRE PREVENTION

LOOK LISTEN AND LEARN

LISTEN

for your home's smoke alarms. Know that you may have only minute to get out if a fire breaks out.

LOOK

for possible fire hazards in your home and eliminate them.

LEARN

two ways out of each room of your home. Exits should be easy to access and free of clutter. After leaving the home, go to your family's designated meeting spot, established when you set up a home fire escape plan.

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RACHEL AUBERGER

Staff Writer

Stop, Drop, and Roll has long been associated with fire safety, but each year the National Fire Protection Association uses the month of October to bring more awareness to fire safety than just those three simple words.

This year, the NFPA is using a new set of words to help people across the country focus on fire safety and what it means to their families. This year they want people to “Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety”.

“What do the sounds mean? Is there a beep or a chirp coming out of your smoke or carbon monoxide alarm?” Lorraine Carli, vice president of outreach and advocacy at NFPA, said that knowing the difference is important when it comes to fire safety. “Knowing the difference can save you, your home, and your family.”

The NFPA provided the following guidance for alarm sounds

- A continuous set of three loud beeps—beep, beep, beep—means smoke or fire. Get out, call 9-1-1, and stay out.

- A single chirp every 30 or 60 seconds means the battery is low and must be changed.

- All smoke alarms must be replaced after 10 years.

- Chirping that continues after the battery has been replaced means the alarm is at the end of its life and the unit must be replaced.

- Make sure your smoke and CO alarms meet the needs of all your family members, including those with sensory or physical disabilities.

Sparta’s Fire Chief, Kirk Young, said that fire safety begins at home.

“Fire Prevention month is the perfect time to educate and talk with your whole family about fire safety,” Young said, and emphasized the importance of talking to children about the hazards of fires. “Teaching young kids about fire prevention reduces the risks of having a fire in your home. Education is the key

to safety, and it is a team effort between our department and you, as parents, to be sure they know how to be responsible and safer around a flame.”

Young gave the following tips for home when it comes to fire safety:

- Use caution when cooking. Cooking is the biggest cause of fire and injuries in homes

- Heat your home safely. Keep space heaters away from furniture and walls

- Check electrical cords. Replace worn out or frayed cords. Don’t use too

Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety™

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many cords in the same outlet

- Replace open flame candles with flameless candles. Avoid accidents by avoiding having an open flame in your home.

- Test your smoke detectors regularly

The NFPA has some gruesome statistics that they have published for this year’s Fire Safety Month, and those statistics reinforce Young’s belief that education is key to fire safety – including knowing what the sounds an alarm makes mean, how and when to test alarms, how to use a fire extinguisher,

and escape route planning.

- 3 of every 5 home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no working smoke alarms

- Less than 50% of homeowners have an escape plan

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is the #1 cause of accidental poisoning in the US

- 60% of consumers do not test their smoke and CO alarms monthly

- Only 47% of people report having CO alarms in their home

- Just 43% of homeowners have an escape plan

- Unattended cooking is the #1 cause of home fires

“With as little as two minutes to escape in the case of fire, knowing the sounds of fire safety and educating everyone in the household as to what to do in the case of a fire are the most important things you can do for your family,” Young concluded. “Of course, we hope that you never experience a house fire, and that fire safety and education keeps you from being in a position to have to escape your home, but preparation is key.”

Fire Safety in Manufactured Homes

If buying or renting a manufactured home is in your future, make sure you keep fire safety in mind. By following a few tips and knowing the facts and the safety requirements for manufactured homes, you can help keep your family safe.

SAFETY TIPS

- » CHOOSE a home built after 1976 that has the HUD label certifying that it meets certain minimum safety standards.
- » Be sure your home has enough smoke alarms. You need a smoke alarm inside each bedroom, outside each sleeping area and in or near the family/live room area(s). For the best protection, interconnect all smoke alarms so when one sounds, they all sound.
- » TEST smoke alarms at least once a month.
- » HAVE a home fire escape plan that includes two ways out of every room and an outside meeting place. Make sure all ways out of the home are easy to use. Practice your fire drill at least twice a year.
- » If smoke alarms sound when you are cooking, consider moving the alarm further from the kitchen area or install a photoelectric type alarm which is less sensitive to cooking.
- » NEVER remove or disable a smoke alarm.
- » CONSIDER having a licensed electrician inspect the electrical system to be sure it is safe and meets the applicable National Electrical Code® requirements.
- » Always stay in the kitchen when frying on the stovetop.
- » Have smokers smoke outside the home. Provide large, non-tip ashtrays and empty them frequently. Douse butts with water before throwing away.

FACT

Smoke alarms are missing in half of all manufactured home fires. Since they are required to be sold with smoke alarms, this may mean people are removing them.

HEAT SENSE

Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn. Buy space heaters with automatic shut-off switches. Turn off portable space heaters before falling asleep or when leaving a room.

Never leave a lit candle unattended. Blow out candles when you leave the room or go to sleep.

Keep gasoline, charcoal lighter and other flammable liquids locked in an outdoor shed. Never store items under the home. Store firewood away from the home.



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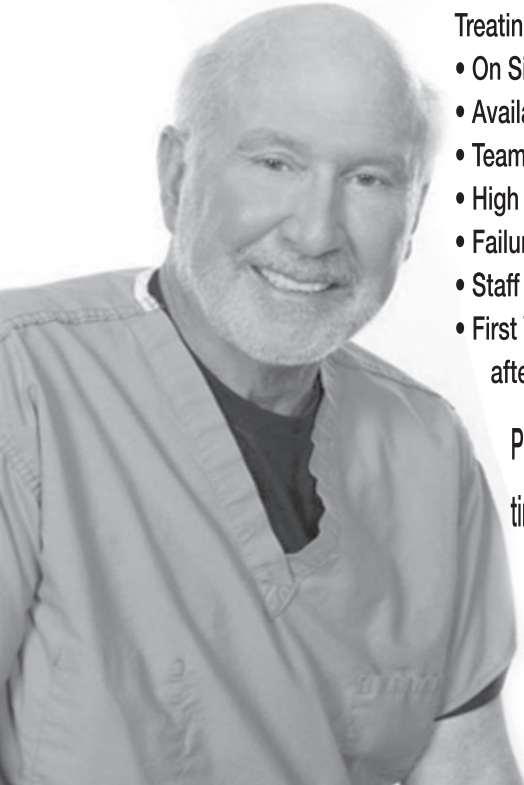
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Create a fire safety plan to include pets

RACHEL AUBERGER
contributor

Fire safety measures are essential yet often overlooked. In addition to outlining the proper action to take should a fire break out, a fire safety evacuation plan can be an invaluable, life-saving tool. A fire safety plan should include all members of a household — including pets.

The American Humane Society says each year more than 500,000 pets are affected by house fires. The National Fire Protection Association estimates that nearly 1,000 home fires each year are accidentally started by pets. Pets are curious animals and they may investigate open flames from unattended candles, fireplaces or grills. Pets may start fires by accidentally turning stove knob covers or biting on or playing with electrical wires and outlets. Young pets may be especially inquisitive and boisterous, so fires may be prevented by keeping young animals behind gates or in secure areas when there are open flames.

There are many ways to safeguard everyone in the event of fire. Here are some steps to include in a fire safety plan.

- Check and replace smoke and carbon monoxide detectors regularly. Monitored smoke detectors can be helpful if you regularly leave pets home alone, since firefighters will be alerted and can respond.

- Take inventory of where pets like to hide or nap. This can prove helpful if you need to evacuate a home quickly due to fire. Remember that pets can sense stress and may be more difficult to catch if they feel something is amiss, advises the ASPCA. Therefore, try to remain as calm as possible.

- Keep pets near exits when you are not home to make it easier for firefighters to enter the house and save the animals. The Red Cross also recommends placing collars and leashes as well as pet carriers near the exits.

- Invest in a pet safety sticker and hang it in a visible window to alert firefighters that you have pets inside. The sticker includes important information, such as the number of pets, type of pets and veterinarian contact information.

- Plan escape routes and practice evacuations. Make sure at least one family member is in charge of grabbing pets and getting outside safely so others can focus on evacuation. Identify all exits and what to do if one or more exits is impassable.

- Have a game plan should the house be damaged and uninhabitable. Line up a place to meet outside and explore pet-friendly accommodations at a hotel, friend or family member's house.

Fire safety plans should include all members of the household, which includes companion animals



Learn the **Sounds** of Fire Safety



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Every Bedroom Needs a Working Smoke Alarm!

Half of home fire deaths happen between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., when most people are asleep.



Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement. Larger homes may need more alarms.

For the best protection, install interconnected smoke alarms in your home. When one sounds, they all sound.



Test alarms at least once a month by pushing the test button.



Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old or if they do not sound when tested.



Some people, especially children and older adults, may need help to wake up. Make sure someone will wake them if the smoke alarm sounds.



When the smoke alarm sounds, get outside and stay outside. Go to your outside meeting place.



Call the fire department from a cellphone or a neighbor's phone. Stay outside until the fire department says it's safe to go back inside.