

Apartment Safety

Fire safety is everyone's responsibility. Every resident should plan to be fire safe. Since most "high-rise" buildings are constructed of fire resistant materials and contain closed stairwells, fires are generally confined to individual rooms or apartments, furnishings, or possibly one floor.

Two or three story wood frame buildings have either enclosed stairwells or if an older building, external fire escapes. Enclosed stairwells have fire doors that must be kept closed at all times! An apartment or high-rise fire is no cause for panic. If you plan ahead and practice fire drills, your chances of survival are greatly increased. Check with your landlord or building manager to ensure Fire Safety Plans including floor plans and evacuation procedures are posted and visible. Please take the time to review and learn them.

What causes most apartment fires?

Cooking / Kitchen fires
Heating equipment such as heaters, stoves and space heaters.
Smoking is a major cause of fatal apartment fires.

How important is prevention?

VITAL – It is the best insurance against fire! Take these simple tips to prevent fires from starting.

- Be careful with smoking materials. Use large, deep, non-tipping ashtrays and dispose of the contents into an airtight metal container or soak the butts before discarding.
- Check furniture and cushions for dropped matches & cigarettes.
- Never smoke in bed, especially when under the influence of alcohol or medications.
- Keep matches and lighters out of the sight and reach of children.
- Never leave cooking unattended. If a pan catches on fire use potholders or oven mitts and slide a lid or a cookie sheet over the flame and turn off the burner.
- Keep space heaters at least 1 meter (3 feet) from combustibles.
- Replace worn or damaged electrical cords. Do not overload electrical outlets. Use an approved power bar/electrical receptacle for additional electrical cords.
- Do not store flammable liquids or compressed gases (i.e.: gas, propane) in your home, car or storage locker.
- Do not use balconies for storage. This can block a means of escape, as well as become a target for arsonists

How will you know if there is a fire?

Your building should be equipped with smoke detectors and other fire alarm components.

Learn to recognize the sound of the fire alarm, and leave the building immediately. Leave the building every time you hear the fire alarm, as fire may be present in any part of the building. Do not ignore the alarm.

It is recommended that every dwelling have a smoke alarm outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. For maximum protection consider installing a smoke alarm in every bedroom.

Maintain your alarms, test them once a month, vacuum them twice a year, and change the battery annually or when a "chirping" noise occurs. Smoke alarms should be replaced every ten years.

What is the plan for my building?

- Floor plans and evacuation procedures should be posted on every floor. Take time to learn them.
- Develop and practice your fire safety plan. Know the two quickest and safest ways out of your building.
- Training and implementing a fire warden on each level of the building is recommended to ensure safe evacuation and ongoing safety programs.
- Have a fire drill at least once a year but practice your escape plans regularly. Coordinate practice drills with neighbors, fellow workers, the floor warden and the building manager.
- Assign someone to assist people with disabilities who may need assistance to evacuate safely.
- Ensure everyone knows what to do when the alarm sounds.
- After exiting the building, go to a prearranged meeting place. Do not go back into the building for any reason.

How do I escape from the fire?

- Check doors before opening them. Be sure to check a door by kneeling or crouching behind the door, reach up high and touch the door, knob and frame. If the door feels cool, open it with caution. Put your shoulder against the door and open it slowly. Slam the door shut if you see flames or smoke on the other side and use another escape route or stay in your apartment.
- If unable to leave your apartment, protect yourself by placing towels, sheets or clothes around the door and vents to keep the smoke out. Call the fire department using the emergency number to notify them of your location. If there is no smoke outside of a window, open it and signal for help by waving a bright towel, sheet or flashlight.
- Never use elevators in a fire! Use the exit stairways and close all doors behind you to slow the spread of fire.
- If an announcement can be heard over your building's public address system, listen carefully and follow the directions.

- If your escape route becomes smoky, crawl low under the smoke. Smoke rises, so the cleanest air is near the floor.
- If your route becomes impassable due to smoke, heat or fire, return to your suite or use an alternate escape route. Never go to the roof as you may become trapped with no means of escape or protection.
- Get out and stay out! Go directly to your planned meeting place and stay there. Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency phone number.

How important is this?

Protecting yourself and others is the top priority! Each and every resident is responsible for your building. Planning and awareness can save minutes or lives.