

## Fire Prevention Tips

### Selecting Smoke Detectors

Photoelectric smoke detectors respond sooner than ionization detectors to slow-burning fires such as furniture or trash. Some detectors contain both technologies. Test batteries twice a year when you change your clocks for Daylight Savings Time. Replace detectors every 10 years.

### Selecting Fire Extinguishers

“ABC” multipurpose extinguishers are effective on fires of Class A (ordinary combustibles: paper, wood, grass); Class B (flammable or combustible liquids: fuels, cooking oil); and Class C (live electrical equipment). Extinguishers have alphanumeric capacity ratings. The 4A40BC is a good choice. Get at least two with the highest rating you can physically handle. Keep one near an exit door, not in a secluded spot where a user could be trapped by a fire and the second near the kitchen. Inspect them annually. If the pressure gauge is out of the green “OK” zone, have it refilled or replaced. Invert them and strike with your palm to loosen the dry chemical and keep it free-flowing; you should be able to feel the powder shifting inside.

### Trim Grass and Other Vegetation

Clear as much space as possible to provide a firebreak of at least 30 feet, so that a grass or brush fire will not immediately spread to your building. Have a hose attached to a spigot, ready for use in case of an exterior fire. Remember: under most weather conditions, brush fires spread uphill.

### Safely Store Combustible Materials

Do not accumulate oily or soiled towels, paintbrushes, or refuse which can self-combust. Keep solvents, paints, and other flammable materials away from furnaces, water heaters or other heat sources. Do not allow storage to block exit doors or pathways.

### Maintain Appliances

Keep stoves, furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces and other appliances in clean, working condition. Consult professional service providers or utility companies when necessary.

### Have Adequate Insurance

Confirm your homeowner’s or renter’s insurance is adequate to cover your current needs, and can replace property lost or damaged in case of a fire.

For details about preparing for fires and other disasters see:

[DisasterReadyDHSF.com](http://DisasterReadyDHSF.com)

Resilient Diamond Heights (RDH) is part of the San Francisco Neighborhood Empowerment Network (NEN) [empowersf.org](http://empowersf.org)

## Planning Household Evacuations



School fire drills taught us to stay calm and make safe decisions in an emergency. We should continue to plan and drill safe exits from our home or neighborhood in case of a house fire, earthquake, wildfire, chemical leak or other disaster.

### Time Urgency

Emergencies may occur in the middle of the night, during storms or power outages. Things happen quickly; you may have less than 10 minutes to gather people and pets, collect things, and get to safety.

### Home Fire Exit

Your first priority is to develop fire exit plans with your household. If you have children, involve them in the planning and calmly explain how to react in an emergency. Fear sometimes causes children to hide in closets or under furniture, so remind them to get out of the building no matter what.

### Identify a Primary and Secondary Exit

Define the most logical escape route from each bedroom or living area. Then define a secondary exit in case fire or fallen objects block that exit. If necessary, purchase special equipment such as ropes or folding ladders for bedroom windows.

### Define a Reunification Point

Pick an easy to remember spot across the street from your residence, such as a tree, street sign or mailbox. Everybody must gather there so you know who is safe. Dial 911 AFTER reaching the gathering point. You don’t have fireproof clothing like firefighters wear, so NEVER go back into a burning building to find someone; let the professionals do that.

### Mount Working Smoke Detectors

Place a smoke detector on every floor and inside each bedroom. Check the batteries twice a year, and replace the units every 10 years as the detecting elements wear out .

### Get Online Worksheets

For tips on home fire exit planning (including a worksheet to develop plans with others in your home) see: [nfpa.org/factsheets](http://nfpa.org/factsheets)



## Evacuating from a Fire

Make sure everyone knows the plan. Hold drills twice a year, including some at night.

### Evacuate First!

Call 9-1-1 after everyone is safely out; the extra moment saved may be important.

### Make Sure Everyone is Awake

Some people sleep so deeply that a smoke alarm does not wake them. Make noise, shout, bang on doors to be certain everyone is responding. Confirm children aren't hiding. Then get everyone out of the building.

### Remember Deadly Smoke Rises

During drills, practice getting low and crawling to the exit to stay near the floor in the "good air" as much as possible.

### Test Closed Doors for Heat

Place the back of your hand (to prevent injury to your fingers) near the door, its doorknob, and the opening at the bottom. If you feel any heat DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR. Block the space under the door with clothes or a towel to prevent smoke from entering. Use the secondary exit to escape.

### Have a "Go Bag"

Your "Go Bag" should include photocopies of passports, IDs, insurance papers and property lists, essential medications, etc. in one strategic location. Make grabbing it part of drills. For details see "What to Prepare" at: [DisasterReadyDHSF.com](http://DisasterReadyDHSF.com)

## If You Try to Fight the Fire

- **Never try to fight a major fire.** Any fire larger than a burning wastebasket is a job for the Fire Department. If you choose to fight the fire, call 9-1-1 first. Advise the dispatcher of your intention to fight the fire.
- **Avoid becoming trapped.** Fight a fire with your back to the door. Never position yourself with the fire between you and the exit, or where it might force you into a corner. If it grows out of control and you abandon your efforts to put it out, close the door as you leave to slow the fire's spread.
- **Think P-A-S-S: PULL** the extinguisher's safety pin; **AIM** the nozzle at the base of the fire from about 6 feet; **SQUEEZE** the lever; and **SWEEP** extinguishing chemical in tight motions across the base of the flames. Do not waste the chemical in uncontrolled spraying.
- **Report all fires.** If you successfully put out a fire, call 9-1-1 as soon as the incident is over. Firefighters will reset building alarms and check for "hot spots" or stray embers that could re-ignite later.

## Neighborhood Evacuation Planning

Your neighborhood evacuation plan becomes an extension of your home fire exit plan. Review the neighborhood plan with your household each time you hold a fire drill so everyone remembers the details. Work with neighbors to correct dangerous conditions and coordinate exit plans.

### Identify a Primary and Secondary Exit

Your primary escape route is the one you normally use when you leave your home. That path might be blocked by unsafe conditions or emergency vehicles. Take a walk around your home now to locate an alternate route, such as a smaller street, alley or footpath that leads out of your neighborhood.

### Subscribe to Safety Messaging

The San Francisco Department of Emergency Management (DEM) sends text messages about emergencies. To subscribe (free of charge), send a text message to 888-777\* with your zip code as the message. Repeat if you want to add zip codes for locations, such as work or school.

### Keep Your Vehicle Ready

Gas might not be available in an emergency. Have enough fuel to get to safety, even if traffic is jammed. Refill when it is below ½ tank and never let it drop below ¼ full. Learn how to open your garage during a power outage.

## During an Evacuation

### Start at Your Reunification Point and Have a Remote Contact

Meet at your fire exit reunification point. Cell coverage may be spotty within the affected area, so have a contact person outside the Bay Area where those away from home can leave text or voice messages. Include where you went in the messages to help bring everyone together later.

### Be Prepared to Walk if Roads Are Impassible

If roads are blocked, you may need to walk to a safe space or to evacuation vehicles. If anyone in your household has trouble walking, talk with at least three neighbors in advance who can assist if needed.

### Pound on Neighbors' Doors

Not everyone will be aware of the need to evacuate. If emergency responders have not arrived, take a moment to make others aware as time permits. DO NOT TAKE LONGER THAN 15 SECONDS at each door before moving on as this may increase your own risks.

### Listen for Official Messages

Power, Internet and cell-service may fail, so have a portable radio (battery or "hand-cranked" power) in your "Go Bag". Tune to 88.5 FM\* or 740 AM\* for official messages. Be careful of rumors from unreliable sources, which may be the cause unfounded fears or panic.

\*San Francisco stations only. Other cities use different text numbers or radio frequencies.