THE ULTIMATE FIRE SAFETY *and* DISABILITIES GUIDE

FACTS ABOUT FIRES IN THE U.S.

EVERY 25 SECONDS
A fire department responds to a fire

EVERY 65 SECONDS
One structure fire is reported

EVERY 33 MINUTES
One civilian fire injury is reported

EVERY 162 MINUTES
One civilian fire death occurs every

People with disabilities may have more difficulty escaping during a fire.

IN THE UNITED STATES, FIRE CAUSES EACH YEAR:

1. **3,400 deaths**
2. **16,000 injuries**
3. **2,400 home** fires involving people with disabilities
4. **$ 11,5 billion** worth of property damage

Being prepared will help limit the risk of starting a fire and avoid getting hurt in the event of a fire.

UNIVERSAL FIRE PREVENTION STEPS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:

- Wear tight-fitting clothing when cooking over an open flame.
- Don't leave hot pans, oven or stove unattended when cooking.
- Make sure pot handles are facing in so they won't be knocked off the stove accidentally.
- Set a timer when cooking food in the oven.
- Never overload electrical outlets.
- Properly store flammable liquids.
- Use candles safely.
- Don't heat your home using the oven.

- Maintain chimneys and space heaters.
- Be cautious of where you smoke – some things can easily catch fire.
- Keep cooking surfaces clean and free of grease buildup.

UNIVERSAL FIRE PREPAREDNESS STEPS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:

- Have an **escape plan** in place with at least two exits.
- Practice the route at least **twice a year**

- Stay low to the ground when practising the route.
- Live on the ground floor, near an exit to make it easier to escape in case of a fire.

- Make sure **the smoke alarm** can be heard and/or seen in any part of the home, and that it will wake up everyone in case they're asleep.

- Test the alarms monthly and **change batteries** at least once a year.

- **Keep essential** items, such as walkers, canes, glasses, or hearing aids at the bedside.

- In case you have to **change your address**, make sure to go through all the steps mentioned above again

UNIVERSAL STEPS TO FOLLOW IN CASE A FIRE BREAKS OUT:

1 Follow the escape plan while staying near the ground to avoid breathing in excess amounts of smoke.

Check doors with the back of the hand before opening them (if a door is hot, don't open it, there might be a fire behind the door. Use another exit instead).

3 Unless instructed by the fire department, never use an elevator during a fire.

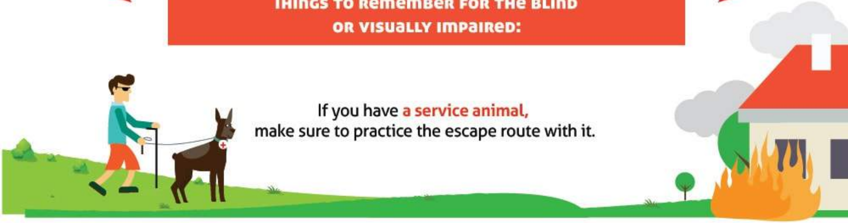
4 Once outside, call 911.

5 Afterwards, let friends and family know everyone's okay.

TIPS ESPECIALLY FOR THE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

According to Disability Statistics 6.6 million Americans are visually impaired or blind. They are at higher risk during emergencies and may accidentally start fires due to their impairment.

THINGS TO REMEMBER FOR THE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED:



If you have **a service animal,** make sure to practice the escape route with it.

Get **a fire alarm** that pauses between alarm cycles in order to be able to be able to hear instructions from a firefighter.

ESPECIALLY FOR PARENTS WITH VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN

Practice "Get low and go" with your children, so they know the importance of staying low while making their way to an exit.

Familiarize children with **the sounds smoke alarms** make and test them at night to make sure children wake up when they go off.

Inform the local fire department that a child in the home is visually impaired so that they can adjust their rescue efforts accordingly.

SAFEKIDSUSA'S FOUR-STEP PLAN FOR PARENTS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN

Create an escape plan with at least **2 ways** out of each room.

Establish a meeting **place** outside.

Call 911 once you're outside.

Practice the plan at least twice a year.

DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING

There are approximately 4 million people in the U.S. with a hearing disability. **Follow the same universal fire prevention steps explained above.** In addition to following the universal steps to stay prepared, the deaf and hard-of-hearing are at risk as they may not be able to hear a traditional smoke alarm, and this requires the following precautions.

Install **a specially designed smoke alarm** with flashing strobe lights. Vibrating pillow pads and bed shakers can also be purchased.

The alarms should be visible from anywhere in the house, so you'll instantly know if there's a fire

Always keep your TTY/TDD, hearing aids and similar devices nearby.

Inform the local fire department that a person in the home is deaf or hard-of-hearing so that they can adjust their rescue efforts accordingly.

PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING MUST:

- Make sure that flashing/vibrating smoke alarms are installed in the home, and that children are aware of their meaning.
- Test the alarms regularly.
- Make sure your child will wake up if the alarms go off while they're asleep.
- Practice the escape route with "get low and go" regularly.
- Teach children what firefighters look like so they won't be afraid of them in case of a fire.
- Inform the local fire department that a child in the home is deaf or hard-of-hearing so that they can adjust their rescue efforts accordingly.

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

There are approximately **700 home** fires involving people with physical disabilities.

People with physical disabilities are especially at risk when it comes to fires as

- homes that aren't specially designed for the physically disabled may present obstacles making it difficult for them to escape.
- disabilities may make it difficult for them to safely and quickly exit a burning structure.

In terms of fire prevention, persons with physical disabilities need to follow the universal fire prevention steps explained earlier. On top of the universal safety steps, there are additional steps that might benefit the phyiscally disabled in case of a fire:

Live on the ground floor, as close to an exit as possible

Make sure walkers and wheelchairs fit through all exits.

If necessary, have a ramp available for emergency exits.

Make sure they're able to open locked or barred doors, windows and other exits.

Inform local emergency services of your special needs and ask your local dispatch to keep your special needs status on file.

Make sure coworkers know how to assist during a fire and be sure there is a safe and efficient way to exit the building for the physically disabled.

Report any obstacles at a work place that might make escaping difficult.

Practice the plan at least twice a year.

! Following a fire, if the physically disabled person uses a wheelchair or walker, they should make sure it hasn't been damaged. !

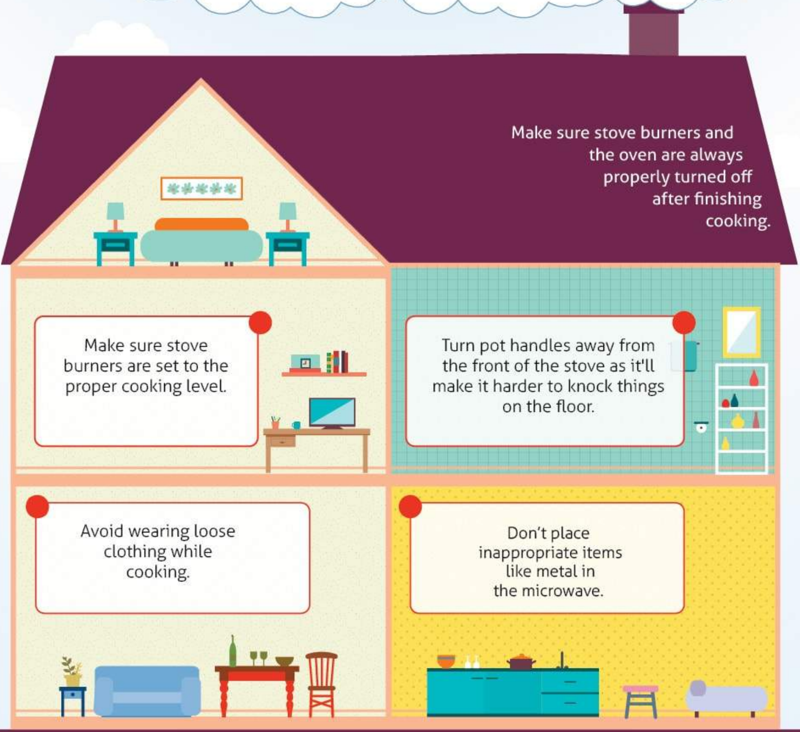
ESPECIALLY FOR PARENTS WITH PHYSICALLY DISABLED CHILDREN

- Make sure your child has a fire escape plan for all frequently visited locations—home, school, church, friends' homes, etc.
- Make sure there are designated adults who will be able to help the child exit the building.
- Practice stop, drop and roll with your child.
- This can be used to smother flames, in case his/her hair or clothing catches on fire.

COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENTS

There are approximately **1,700 home** fires involving people with mental disabilities.

People with cognitive impairments are also at a high risk of death or injury during a fire. Similarly, the best way for them to protect themselves or for their caregivers to protect them is through fire prevention.



Make sure stove burners and the oven are always properly turned off after finishing cooking.

Make sure stove burners are set to the proper cooking level.

Turn pot handles away from the front of the stove as it'll make it harder to knock things on the floor.

Avoid wearing loose clothing while cooking.

Don’t place inappropriate items like metal in the microwave.

Properly store flammable items, such as paper towels and kitchen towels to avoid them catching fire from contact with hot surfaces.

USING CHECK LISTS when dealing with potential fire hazards will lower the risk of starting a fire

Always follow the universal steps when preparing against fire, but depending on the severity of the cognitive impairment **The National Fire Protection Association** also advice the following:

NFPA®

Make sure the person with a cognitive impairment understands what the smoke alarm sound or signal means and teach them what to do when they hear it.

Assess whether the person will be able to follow the escape plan.

Decide ahead of time who will give the person assistance (if needed). It is best to designate at least two people if possible.

Rehearse the escape plan sufficiently often to make sure the person with cognitive impairment does not forget the different steps.

Determine ahead of time if the person will know how to use the exits.

Mark escape routes and/or post signs that the person has indicated they understand, eg. exit signs above door

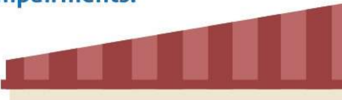
Make sure local emergency responders are aware that someone with special needs lives in the home.

- ✓ Following a fire, a caregiver to someone with cognitive impairments must talk with them about the incident and comfort them if needed.
- ✓ Make sure to practice the new escape plan with the person with cognitive impairments

ESPECIALLY FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN WITH COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENTS

Safe Kids Worldwide recommends the following for parents with cognitive impairments:

1. Make an escape plan with at least two ways out of each room.



2. Use the child's strengths and interests when explaining different concepts.
3. If needed, use visuals to help them understand.
4. Use exit signs to help your child remember how to get out.
5. Designate a meeting place outside the home.
6. Frequently practice the plan to make sure your child will always know what to do in case of a fire.

We advice people in contact with persons with disabilities to read through this guide regularly to be able to provide appropriate assistance.

This infographic was made available by www.SplitLevel.net