

Home Fires: America's Biggest Disaster Threat



Four out of five Americans are unaware that home fires are the most common disaster threat.

Preparedness is your family's best defense against deadly fires. The Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness encourages Ohioans to learn what to do to prepare for and recover from natural and home disasters.

According to the Ohio Department of Commerce State Fire Marshal, during the November 2007 - January 2008 holiday season, 24 people died in 2,200 Ohio residential fires.

Ohioans should have their home's heating system checked annually by a qualified professional.

Use these checklists to help keep your family and home safe.

To prevent fires before they start:

- ✓ Never leave burning candles or fireplaces unattended.
- ✓ Keep fuel (objects that can easily catch fire, such as paper, clothing or bedding) at least three feet away from heat sources.

To stay safe from fires:

- ✓ **Create a home fire escape plan.** Include two escape routes from every room in the home. Ensure that all family members know how to open windows and remove screens (if necessary). Determine a meeting place outside and away from the home, such as a tree or a fence.
- ✓ **Practice your plan at least twice a year.** Sound the smoke detectors in the middle of the night when people are sleeping. Time the household to see how long it takes for members to safely exit the home and meet at your predetermined meeting place.
- ✓ **Install smoke alarms,** escape ladders and carbon monoxide detectors.
- ✓ **Replace smoke alarm batteries** either once a year or every time you set your clocks for daylight savings.
- ✓ **Purchase and learn how to use fire extinguishers.** Inexpensive extinguishers are available at most home improvement stores.