

Fire Safety for People with Hearing Loss

Fire Safe and Sound

According to the Hearing Loss Association of America (2019), approximately 48 million Americans report some degree of hearing loss. Many children and adults with hearing loss or who are deaf are unable to rely on the life-saving warning sound of a working smoke alarm to alert them of fire. It is crucial that this audience is aware of the availability of flashing or vibrating smoke alarms, and the importance of proper escape planning.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) encourages the hearing impaired population to practice the following precautionary steps.

Why are People with Hearing Loss or Deafness at risk?

- Decreased hearing may limit a person's ability to take quick action and escape during a fire emergency.
- Depending on physical limitations, many of the actions an individual can take to protect themselves from the dangers of fire may require help from a caretaker, neighbor, or outside source.

Install and Maintain Smoke Alarms

Deaf or hard of hearing persons cannot rely on the traditional audible smoke alarm but can rely on visual alarms equipped with strobe lights.

- Contact your local fire department for information about obtaining a flashing or vibrating smoke alarm.
- Install a flashing or vibrating smoke alarm on every level of your home. Test all smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Your chances of surviving a home fire are far greater if you have the initial warning from a smoke alarm.

Don't Isolate Yourself

- Be sure to inform family members, the building manager, or a neighbor of your fire safety plan and practice it with them.
- Contact your local fire department on a non-emergency telephone number (use appropriate TTY devices if necessary) and explain your special needs. Your local fire department will be able to help you with your escape plan and may also be able to perform a home inspection, as well as offer suggestions about smoke alarm placement.
- Ask emergency providers to keep your special needs information on file.

Plan Your Escape

- Practice escape plans every month.
- Practice escaping from every room in the home. The best plans have two ways to get out of each room.
- Make sure that windows are not stuck, screens can be taken out quickly and that security bars can be properly opened.

In Case of Fire

- When a fire occurs, do not waste any time-saving property.
- If you must escape through smoke, remember to crawl low, under the smoke and keep your mouth covered.
- Never open doors that are hot to the touch.
- Designate a meeting place outside the building and take attendance.
- Once out, stay out! Remember to escape first, then notify the fire department using the 911 system or proper local emergency number in your area.

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