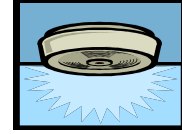




## Apartment Fire Safety



Residents of multi-family dwellings, such as apartments and condominiums, need to pay particular attention to fire safety due to the high occupancy loads within the building. **All residents** are responsible for the safety of **everyone** in the building. With that said, fire safety must start at home. Although a fire in an apartment building is no more likely than in a single family home, the spread of fire and smoke is much greater in an apartment building.

Being **prepared** and **practicing** good fire safety behaviors is the key to **protecting** yourself and your family. Don't allow yourself or your loved ones to become a fire statistic. In 2008 in the US, 3320 civilians lost their lives as a result of a fire. Another 16,705 civilians were injured. In addition, 118 firefighters lost their lives serving their citizens.



Consider these 3 P's of fire safety: **Protecting**, **Preparing** and **Practicing**

**Smoke Detectors Save Lives-Test Them Regularly**

## **Protecting**

Protecting yourself and your family, and therefore your neighbors, is paramount to a sound fire safety plan. Fire spreads rapidly with today's fire loads. Furniture and fixtures are made of synthetics and plastics which burn extremely hot and help to spread fire very quickly. Early detection is the key to your survival.

Smoke alarms are an invaluable tool for protection from fire and smoke. Time is of the essence when a fire starts. Smoke alarms must be located outside every sleeping area and on every level of the dwelling. **We encourage everyone to have smoke alarms inside every bedroom as well as the one located outside the sleeping areas.**

In addition to smoke alarms, dwelling units that have fuel burning appliances should have a carbon monoxide (CO) detector. Units that have attached garages, wood burning fireplaces, natural gas, propane or oil heating systems, are subject to this silent killer. CO poisoning occurs very quickly and in many cases interferes with our ability to think rationally and impairs the ability to escape.

The common hallways in the buildings must be kept clear at all times. There shall never be storage in the hallway as this may block an exit and increases the fire load in the exit hallway.

Never delay calling the fire department. If you can fight the fire with an extinguisher, call the fire department first, get everyone out and then attempt to fight the fire. If the fire is beyond your capabilities, get out and stay out! Using a fire extinguisher takes practice and skill. If you are not familiar with the operation of the extinguisher, it may do more harm than good.

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## **Preparing**

Being prepared requires planning **before** an incident occurs. There is no time to develop a plan during a crisis. Smoke alarms and CO detectors are only as good as the batteries inside. We suggest changing your batteries when you change your clocks in the Fall, or when the unit signals the low battery alarm. We recommend replacing smoke alarms and CO detectors that are 10 or more years old. Studies indicate the reliability of older alarms diminishes after 10 years.

Test smoke alarms at least weekly. Periodically vacuum your smoke alarms. Dust accumulation and even spiders may impair the smoke alarm or cause false alarms.

Have an escape plan for your unit. Know two ways out of your unit and out the building. Be aware of neighbors that may need assistance. Establish a meeting place outside the building away from the path of fire trucks responding to the complex. **Once you are out of the building, stay out.** If someone doesn't come to the meeting area, notify the fire department. They are equipped to enter the building.

Make sure your fire extinguisher is inspected as required by the manufacturer. You should visually inspect your extinguisher monthly and have a qualified fire extinguisher service provider inspect them annually. Also, know your own limitations with the extinguishers and what the extinguisher is capable of as well.

You should have flashlights readily available. Keep a flashlight in a night stand or somewhere convenient in the bedroom. Have a flashlight in areas that you are in the most as well such as the kitchen or living room. Always have spare batteries on hand for smoke alarms and flashlights.

Unit doors leading into the common hallways shall be self-closing and shall positively latch. This helps ensure that smoke and fire do not get into the common hallways so all residents can safely exit. This also helps minimize smoke and fire damage from spreading throughout the entire building.

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## **Practicing**

Having a plan is only half the battle. If you don't practice your escape plan, it is not very likely to work. Most importantly, **everyone** needs to participate. Test a smoke alarm without notifying your family. See how they react to the smoke alarm. Do they ignore it or explore it? Do they leave the building and go to your predetermined meeting area? If they don't respond to the alarm, re-training is required.

Remember, when evacuating your dwelling, close doors behind you. If the fire is in your unit, closing the door helps to limit the spread of fire and smoke in the exit hallway and throughout the building. If the fire is not in your unit, closing doors helps to minimize smoke and/or fire damage in your unit.

Having a plan in place before something happens is the key to your success. By taking the time to protect your property and family, preparing for emergencies and practicing your fire safety escape plan may significantly increase your survival in a fire situation. Knowing what you are going to do before something happens reduces confusion and panic and increases survivability.

Please use the Apartment Fire Safety Self-Inspection Checklist on the Town of South Windsor Fire Marshal's page. The checklist is designed to help residents perform a fire and life safety self-assessment of their dwelling units and common areas.

If you should have any fire and life safety questions, please contact the Fire Marshal at 860-644-2511- x217 for assistance.

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