



Apartment Fire Safety

A Fact Sheet on Fire Safety in Multi-family Housing

Every 15 seconds, a fire department responds to a fire somewhere in the United States. The major causes of home fire deaths are smoking materials, heating, arson, and children playing with matches and lighters. By paying careful attention to these issues, each of us can share the responsibility of keeping our homes safe from fire. For those of you living in multi-family housing complexes the Apartment Association of Fort Wayne, the Fort Wayne Fire Department, and the U. S. Fire Administration encourage you to remember the following tips.

Protection

Smoke detectors are required to protect each level and all the sleeping areas in your home. Landlords are required to provide working smoke alarms for every rental property. Tenants are responsible for testing and maintaining the detectors. Monthly; push the button on the detector, it should beep loudly. If your smoke detector uses batteries, replace them at least once a year. At the same time, vacuum your detectors to remove cobwebs and dust.

If you notice that exit lights are not lit, are broken or vandalized, notify the manager. Exitways should be kept clear of trash and other obstructions. Self-closing doors such as those leading into stairwells should never be blocked open. These doors keep flames and smoke from spreading.

Preparation

If you hear the building alarm, react immediately. Do not wait for instructions to begin evacuation. In a fire, seconds count. If you discover a fire, pull the building alarm to alert others. If you can close doors to confine the fire, do so. Upon evacuating the building, call 911 from a safe location to ensure the fire department is responding. Be prepared to tell them the nature of the emergency, and the address of the building.

If you have special needs that prevent you from exiting the building by the stairwells, ask the building manager if your name and room number can be posted at the fire alarm panel or in the manager's office, so that fire fighters are made aware of your need for assistance. Also consider residing only on the first floor.

Every unit should have a fire escape plan and practice it. Know at least two ways out of the building. Feel doors before you open them. If they are hot, do not open them, rather use another exit. Be sure to close all doors as you pass through, including your apartment door. If you encounter smoke, drop to the floor and crawl, as smoke and heat rise. Choose an outside meeting place outside and well away from the building. That way you will know everyone is out. Fire escape routes must not include elevators, which might take you right to the fire.



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For People Who Don't Use Stairs or if the Stairs Are Blocked By Smoke

During a fire emergency, and any time a fire alarm is ringing, elevators should not be used by residents. To exit the building during a fire alarm, the stairs should be used.

If you are unable to use the stairs, you will need to seek an area of safety and usually the safest place for you to seek refuge and wait for assistance is inside your apartment. If you become trapped in your apartment call 911 from your room and tell the dispatch you are unable to escape and hang a light colored towel or blanket out of a window to indicate your location. If a balcony is available it may be safer to wait there for help and it will be easier for firefighters to see you.

If smoke is present, observe the following survival rules.

- Use towels or clothing to block openings around doors or vents where smoke might enter. Put a wet cloth over your mouth and nose if you cannot stay away from the smoke.
- If smoke or fire enters your unit, stay low to the floor to breathe the best air.
- It is not advisable to open or break windows. Often smoke from the outside of the building can enter through open windows. Breaking windows can put you at a greater risk to smoke entering from the outside, and can hamper rescue efforts below.

For More Information Contact:

The U. S. Fire Administration
301-447-1000
www.usfa.dhs.gov



Fort Wayne Fire Department
Safety Education
260-427-1483; 427-1368; 427-5179
www.fortwaynefiredepartment.org