

Long Hill residents urged to develop a 'family fire safety plan'

Print Page

Published: Oct 2nd, 6:38 AM

LONG HILL TWP. – Next week, Oct. 4 to 10, is National Fire Prevention Week, and it is a good time for all residents to develop and practice a fire safety plan, according to Barb Chestnut of Millington, the response director of the local Colonial Crossroads Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Families should consider measures to make their homes more fireproof and to discuss an evacuation plan with members of the family, Chestnut said. Last winter, there were a number of house fires in the area which displaced families and damaged or destroyed homes.

"Most people just don't consider that a house fire could happen to them," says Barb Chestnut of Millington, the chapter's director of response. "Last year, we responded to fires at multi-family homes, large apartment complexes and single family homes. Most of the fires produced severe fire damage and were rendered unlivable. At each of these disasters, there was always a sense of disbelief. People just don't think this is going to happen to them. If you have more than one story on your home the most important thing you can do for your family is to buy a fire escape ladder, practice an evacuation plan and discuss what to do if there is a fire in your home."

The Disaster Action Team assisted 27 families displaced by fires and sheltered 36 individuals last year.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, in 2008 one home structure fire was reported every 82 seconds and every 22 seconds a fire department responded to a fire.

Fire kills more Americans each year than all natural disasters combined.

Be Prepared

“Once a fire has started, there’s no time to plan how to get out. Sit down with your family today and make a step-by-step plan for escaping a fire,” said Stirling Fire Chief Steve Remington. “Draw a floor plan of your house marking two ways out of every room, especially sleeping areas. Agree on a meeting place outside your house and practice your escape plan twice a year.”

The following are recommended rules for safety:

- Have your family practice escaping from your home at different times of the day.
- Make sure everyone knows how to call 9-1-1.
- Purchase escape ladders for sleeping areas on the second and third floors. Make sure everyone in your home learns how to use them ahead of time by reading the manufacturer’s instructions and understanding the steps to use them. Store them near the window where they will be used.
- Select a safe location away from the home where your family can meet after escaping.
- If you see smoke or fire in your first escape route, use your second way out. If you must exit through smoke, crawl low under the smoke.
- Before escaping through a closed door, feel the door before opening it. If it is warm, use your second escape route.
- Teach your family members to stop, drop to the ground, and roll if their clothes catch on fire. Practice this with your children.
- If smoke, heat or flames block both of your exit routes, stay in the room with the door closed. Place a rolled towel underneath the door. Signal for help by waving a brightly colored cloth or shining a flashlight at the window. If there is a telephone in the room, call the fire department and let them know your exact location inside the home.

Once you’ve escaped your home, stay out.

“Preparing for a home fire doesn’t require a lot of expensive equipment or training, and Fire Prevention Week is a great time to get started,” said Chestnut.

Here are more fire prevention tips.

- Smoke alarms should be placed on each level of the home and outside each sleeping area, unless people sleep with doors closed, in which case install smoke alarms inside sleeping areas, too.
- Use the test button to check each smoke alarm once a month. When necessary, replace batteries immediately. Replace all batteries once a year.
- Vacuum away cobwebs and dust from your smoke alarms monthly.
- Smoke alarms become less sensitive over time. Replace your smoke alarms every 10 years.

- Consider having one or more working fire extinguishers in your home. Get training from the fire department in how to use them.
- Consider installing an automatic fire sprinkler system in your home.

In addition to Long Hill Township, the Colonial Crossroads Chapter serves Berkeley Heights, Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, East Hanover, Florham Park, Madison, New Providence, Springfield and Summit.

For more information, visit www.redcross.org/homefires.

Copyright © 2009 - Recorder Community Newspapers

[x] Close Window