

Macomb Township Fire Department

Fire and Life Safety Tips

October 2009

The Question: How Much Time do I Have to Escape?



Most people will never have a fire in their home – but some do. Each year thousands of people die. Some of these deaths could have been prevented. In talking to people about fire safety over the years as it pertains to escaping a fire, there are two areas of understanding that most people need help with:

- The actual time it takes for a fire to become deadly
- The lack of visibility

It is not their fault. Hollywood does a terrible job depicting a fire. Hollywood fires are bright, there is very little heat and the actors are only hurt when the obligatory “beam” falls out of the ceiling to land on the actor’s back. Believe nothing of what you’ve seen in movies and on television shows – it simply isn’t that way. It would make for boring cinema if they accurately showed how an uncontrolled fire behaves in a home. The screen would be black. The air would be scorching hot.

One-third of American households who made an estimate thought they would have at least 6 minutes before a fire in their home would become life-threatening. Fires can become deadly to occupants in a home in as little as 30 seconds. Everything in the room doesn’t have to burn to be deadly. Things in the home that are burning will put off poisonous gases. These gases will confuse and disorient people still in the home, making the simplest tasks seem difficult to impossible. Very, very quickly smoke will obscure lights in the room and any daylight coming through the windows. Rooms will become black. The heat will be unbearable. The combination of poisonous gases and smoke will be choking and blinding.



Photo Credit – R. MacDonald

Try doing this right now – close your eyes, hold your breath and crawl to the nearest exit. How long did it take you to get out? How about everyone else in your home? Practicing at least twice a year will lower this time. Taking preventative measures such as early smoke detection and keeping doors closed will give you more needed time.

The Answer:

To survive you must act immediately. Your time is measured in seconds – not minutes. Make a plan and teach your family. No, you will not have time to gather jewelry, photo albums, etc.

Security bars may keep you safe from intruders but may also trap you inside. Make sure quick release devices are installed that allow them to be able to be opened immediately in an emergency.



Consider the layout of your home and the occupants. What special arrangements do you need to make to be able to **immediately** leave your home 24/7?

We are here to help.

MACOMB TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT
(586) 286-0027

REFERENCES

Macomb Township Fire Department Fire and Life Safety Initiative

National Fire Protection Association

United States Fire Administration