

Fire Safety and Preparedness Guide





Preparedness and planning are key to protecting yourself, your family, and your neighbors and preventing a future tragedy. There are a number of things residents can do to reduce the risk of a fire and to avoid significant loss should a fire occur.

Fires in residential buildings have the potential to spread, sending heat and smoke throughout the building, which compromises the safety of all occupants.

We cannot emphasize enough how important it is that residents are aware of the proper safety protocols to follow in the event of a fire in your apartment or building. We encourage you, your family, and your household staff to familiarize yourselves with the NYC Fire Department Emergency Fire Safety and Evacuation Instructions in your Apartment Building Emergency Preparedness Guide, so that you know when to evacuate and when to stay in your apartment in the event of a fire.

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Should you stay or should you go?

What to do in the event of a fire.

Knowing and understanding the type of building you live in affects how you and your family members should plan for and escape a fire — and can ultimately save a life.

The evacuation portion of your Apartment Building Emergency Preparedness Guide will depend on:

- Whether your building is fireproof (non-combustible) or non-fireproof (combustible), and
- If the fire is in your apartment or another area of the building.

If the fire is not in your apartment: Non-combustible buildings

- Open windows a few inches at top and bottom unless flames and smoke are coming from below.
- Do not break any windows.
- If conditions appear life-threatening, open a window and wave a towel or sheet to attract the attention of firefighters.
- If smoke conditions worsen before help arrives, get down on the floor and take short breaths through your nose.
- Stay inside your apartment and listen for instructions from firefighters unless conditions become dangerous.
- Seal the doors to your apartment with wet towels or sheets and seal air ducts or other openings where smoke may enter with duct tape.
- If possible, retreat to a balcony or terrace from the source of the flames, heat, or smoke.

If the fire is not in your apartment: Combustible buildings

- Feel the door and doorknob for heat. If not hot, open the door slightly and check the hallway for smoke, heat, or fire.
- Exit the apartment and building if you can safely do so.
- If the hallway or stairwell is not safe because of smoke, heat, or fire and you have access to a fire escape, use it to exit the building. Proceed cautiously and always carry or hold onto small children.
- If you cannot use the stairs or fire escape, call 911. Tell them your address, floor, apartment number, and the number of people in your apartment.
- Seal the doors to your apartment with wet towels or sheets and seal air ducts or other openings where smoke may enter with duct tape.
- Open windows a few inches at top and bottom unless flames and smoke are coming from below.
- Do not break any windows.
- If conditions appear life-threatening, open a window and wave a towel or sheet to attract the attention of firefighters.
- If smoke conditions worsen before help arrives, get down on the floor and take short breaths through your nose. If possible, retreat to a balcony or terrace from the source of the flames, heat, or smoke.

If the fire is in your apartment regardless of construction type:

- Close the door to the room where the fire is and leave the apartment.
- Make sure everyone leaves the apartment with you.
- Take your keys and close, but do not lock, your apartment door.
- Use the nearest stairwell that is free of smoke to exit the building.
- Do not use the elevators.
- Call 911 once you reach a safe location (never assume a fire has been reported).
- Meet the members of your household at a predetermined location outside the building.
- Notify responding firefighters if anyone is unaccounted.

Fireproof (non-combustible) does not mean that the building is immune to fire. While the structural components may not catch on fire, the contents may generate life-threatening heat and smoke. In a fireproof building, generally speaking, the fire and smoke will be contained to the portion of the building or apartment where the fire has started.



Save lives: Close the door

“Close the Door” notices are a visible reminder to occupants of the importance of closing doors when exiting your apartment or building during a fire.

- Smoke inhalation is the number one cause of fire-related deaths.
- Closing doors helps contain fire and smoke, assists firefighters, prevents smoke from entering stairwells, and limits damage to your home and building.
- During a fire, self-closing doors and fire proof doors prevent fire and smoke from traveling between apartments and floors.
- Notify building staff immediately if your apartment door is not self-closing so they can remedy the situation.
- Keep hallways, stairways, and outside fire escapes free of obstructions at all times.
- Do not store anything such as baby strollers, bicycles, or rubbish in hallways, on or under stairways, or on stairway landings.

NYC Local Law 111 requires all doors providing access to apartments, hallways, and stairwells to be self-closing or equipped with a closing device.



Window security gates

- If your apartment building has an outside fire escape, only FDNY-approved security gates that open without the use of a key may be installed on the fire escape window.
- After installing an approved security gate, make sure everyone in your home can operate the release devices.
- Remember to keep the fire escape window clear of all obstructions such as furniture, plants, and air conditioners.

Child safety window guards

- The NYC Health Code requires building owners to install child safety window guards when a child 10 years old or younger lives in the apartment.
- The window guards are small barriers installed to protect children from falling out of the windows.
- To help ensure your safety during a fire, these guards must not be installed on your fire escape window.



Risk countermeasures: Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast. Working smoke alarms give you early warning so you can get outside quickly.

- Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms, at a minimum, must be installed within 15 feet of the primary entrance to each room lawfully used for sleeping purposes.
- A smoke alarm should be installed on the ceiling or high on a wall.
- Interconnected smoke alarms are best; when one smoke alarm sounds, they all sound.
- Combination CO and smoke alarms are recommended, but if you have separate ones, be sure you know the sound of each alarm.
- Press the test button to be sure alarms are working at least once a month.
- Keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen to reduce false alarms. Heat-activated alarms work best in kitchen areas.
- Alarms should be at least 10 feet from the stove.
- People who are hard-of-hearing or deaf can use special alarms that have strobe lights and bed shakers.
- Replace all smoke alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions, or at least every 10 years.

Fatal levels of carbon monoxide can be produced in just minutes, even if doors and windows are open.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that often goes undetected, striking victims caught off guard or in their sleep.

This “invisible killer” is produced by burning fuel in small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges, portable generators, furnaces, cars, or trucks. When the gas builds up in enclosed spaces, people or animals who breathe it can be poisoned. Ventilation does not guarantee safety.

- Have your furnace, water heater, and any other gas or coal-burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Never use a generator, pressure washer, flameless chemical heater, or any gasoline-powered engine inside your home, basement, or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent.
- Never use a gas oven for heating your home.
- Never burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.

When the carbon monoxide alarm sounds

Never ignore a carbon monoxide alarm and do not try to find the source of the gas. Instead, follow these steps:

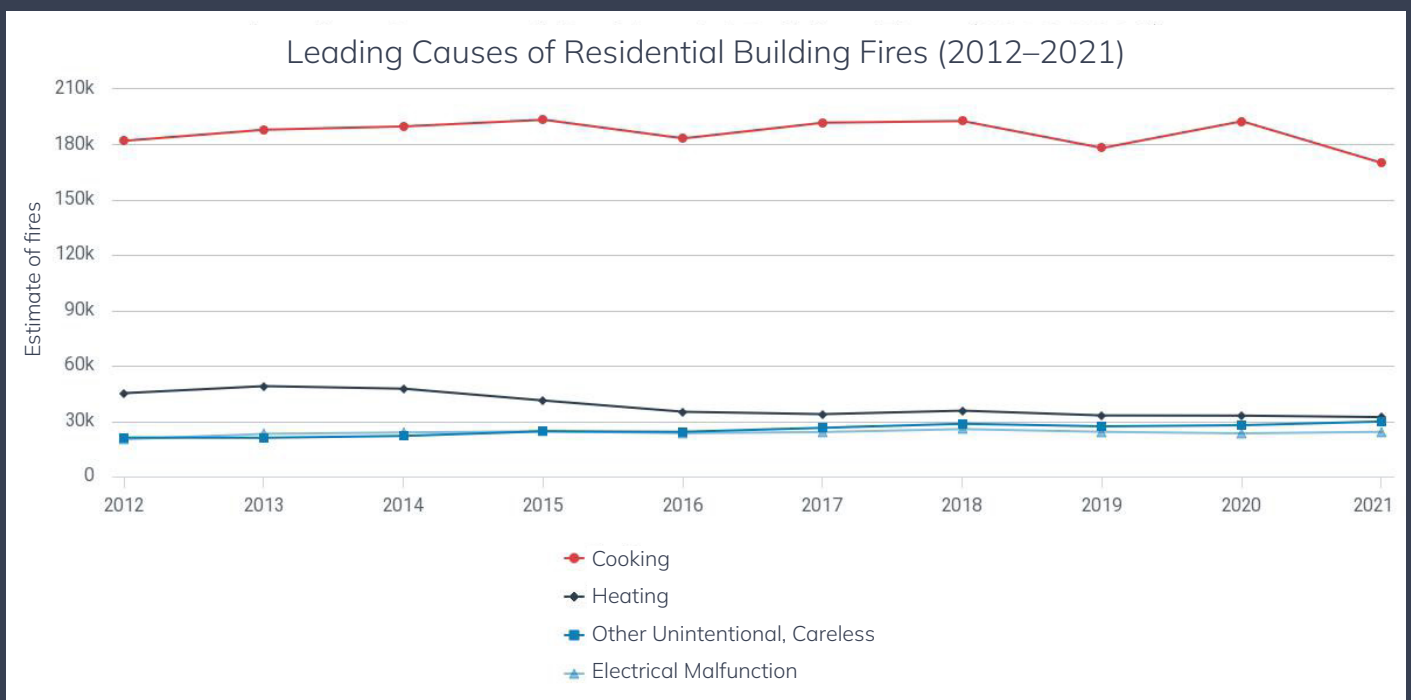
- Immediately move outside to fresh air.
- Call 911.
- Do a head count to account for everyone.
- Do not reenter the premises until instructed to do so by emergency responders.
- Seek prompt medical help if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseated.



Roughly three out of five fire deaths happen in homes with no, or non-working, smoke alarms.

Safety tips for using electric space heaters

- When purchasing an electric space heater, look for a model with automatic shut-off features.
- Read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels before using your space heater.
- DO NOT leave an operating heater unattended; always unplug it when not in use.
- DO NOT use your heater with a power strip or extension cord as overheating could result in a fire.
- Never place any electrical cord under area rugs or carpets.
- Unplug the heater when not in use by pulling the plug straight out from the outlet after first shutting off the unit.
- Inspect the heater's cord periodically; never use a heater with a damaged cord.
- Check periodically for a secure plug/outlet fit. If the plug does not fit snugly into the outlet or if the plug becomes very hot, the outlet may need to be replaced. Check with a qualified electrician to replace the outlet.
- The use of kerosene or propane space heaters is strictly prohibited and illegal in New York City as their use poses a high risk of death and injury.
- Always keep combustibile materials, such as furniture, pillows, bedding, papers, clothes, and curtains at least three feet from the front of the heater and away from the sides and rear.
- DO NOT block heater's air intake or exhaust source.
- Unless the heater is designed for outdoor use or in bathrooms, DO NOT use in damp or wet areas, as heater parts may be damaged by moisture.
- DO NOT plug any other electrical device into the same outlet as your heater. This could result in overheating.
- Keep children away from heaters and never place one in a child's room without supervision.
- Never use a heater on tabletops.





Safety tips to avoid kitchen fires

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
- Keep things that can catch fire — potholders, oven mitts, paper or plastic bags, curtains — away from your stovetop.
- Wear short, close-fitting, or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire if it comes in contact with a gas flame or electric burner.
- Have a “kid-free zone” of at least three feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.
- Keep an oven mitt and large lid nearby. If a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by sliding the lid over the pan. Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan.
- To keep the fire from restarting, leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.
- If you have a stove fire, when in doubt, just get out and call the fire department, being sure to close all doors behind you.
- In case of an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you or your clothing. After a fire, the oven should be checked and/or serviced before being used again.
- Consider an ABC fire extinguisher placed in the vicinity of your stove.

If you suffer a burn:

- Treat a burn right away, putting it in cool water.
- Cool the burn for three to five minutes.
- Cover with a clean, dry cloth.
- If the burn is bigger than your fist, or if you have any questions, get medical help right away.

Acting fast: Using a fire extinguisher

Fire extinguishers in residences

Portable fire extinguishers can be an important component of your home's fire preparedness plan, but it's crucial to know in advance how and when to use one.

- **When used properly**, a fire extinguisher applies an agent that cools burning material or removes oxygen so the fire can no longer burn.
- **When used improperly**, it could result in spreading the fire and causing serious injury or death.

Be sure to read the owner's manual to familiarize yourself with how it operates and how often it should be checked or replaced.

Fire extinguisher best practices

- Each floor of your home should have a working ABC (for all types of fires) fire extinguisher.
- Register your extinguishers with the manufacturer so you are alerted to any updates or recalls.
- Place extinguishers on an accessible shelf with the operating instructions facing outward, or hang extinguishers in plain sight with the brackets supplied by the manufacturer.
- Extinguishers should be 3.5 to 5 feet above the floor and out of the reach of small children.



If the fire is small and you feel confident that the decision to fight the fire will not result in additional risk to yourself or others:

- Call 911 and get everyone out of the residence.
- Always keep a clear evacuation path behind you as you fight the fire.
- Stay low to avoid toxic smoke and fumes as well as the extinguishing agents.
- To increase your chances of successfully and safely extinguishing the fire, use the PASS technique:
 - **Pull** the pin, hold the extinguisher upright and away from you, and release the locking mechanism.
 - **Aim** low, pointing the extinguisher at the base of the fire from a safe distance.
 - **Squeeze** the handle/lever slowly and evenly.
 - **Sweep** the nozzle from side to side.

If the fire does not extinguish quickly or reignites, get out of the apartment, making sure to close all doors behind you.

Even if only a short burst of extinguishing agent is discharged, the fire extinguisher must be refilled or replaced after each use.



[Click here to watch a training video on how to use a fire extinguisher.](#)

The appropriate type of extinguisher must be used for the corresponding class of fire. The letters on the extinguisher indicate the types of fires they can handle:



Class A

Rubbish, wood, and paper fires



Class B

Oil and grease fires



Class C

Electrical fires



Class ABC

Works on all of these fires

For a typical New York City apartment, a five-pound ABC Dry Chemical Fire Extinguisher is recommended



Creating a fire escape plan for your home

Beyond having smoke and CO alarms in your home, it's also essential to have an escape plan in case of a fire or other emergency. Everyone in your household should help make the plan and practice it regularly. As part of your escape planning process, be sure you know if you live in a fireproof or non-fireproof building. This will help you determine if you should stay or go, depending on the circumstances of the fire in your building.

What should your plan include?

- Show all windows and doors
- Ensure all windows and doors open easily
- Teach everyone in your household how to unlock windows, doors, and security devices
- Remind all household members to close the doors behind them as they exit
- Designate family members responsible for waking children and older adults
- Pick a meeting place for members of your household to meet during an evacuation
- Share your plan with everyone in your household

Safety tips after you've created a plan

- Practice your plan at least twice a year
- Since most fires occur at night, make your safety drills realistic
- Practice escaping through smoke by crawling low on your hands and knees
- Follow your escape plan from beginning all the way through to your assigned meeting place outside your home
- Stress the importance of calling 911 once in a safe location
- Review your building's Fire Safety Notice for specific instructions on what to do in the event of a fire

Use this guide to create a map of your home

To protect your household and comply with your building policy, it is important to renew your homeowners insurance each year.

Most condominiums and cooperatives require owners and shareholders to obtain a homeowners insurance policy per the building's governing documents. This helps to ensure that your apartment and its contents are covered for any loss from damage, theft, fire, or a weather-related event if the unexpected should occur. Everyone should secure and maintain a policy.

Your building's insurance policies cover only the building itself and do not cover:

- Your personal property against damage or theft
- You for liability should any guest/visitor injure themselves inside your apartment
- You for property damage caused by negligence, such as a plumbing fixture overflow

The information in the guide was developed from credible sources including those listed below. As your managing agent, FirstService Residential distributes to each building it manages a Fire Safety Notice specific for your building annually, each January. The Fire Safety Notice contains basic fire safety tips and information about your building, including the type of construction, the types of fire safety systems and the different ways of exiting the building in case of fire or evacuation. While every effort is made to achieve accuracy in the information contained in this guide it is not intended as advice to any specific resident or regarding any specific building. The guide is no way intended to serve as a replacement for reading and following the instructions in your building's Fire Safety Notice. FirstService Residential shall not be liable for any damages resulting from reliance on the accuracy of information contained herein.

Credits:
New York City Fire Department
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Apartment fire safety checklist

Prevention and planning are key to protecting your family and neighbors. Use this checklist as a guide to identify possible fire safety problems in your apartment or building. If you check NO to any question, these potential hazards should be corrected immediately.

Y / N

- » Do you have at least one operable smoke alarm within 15 feet of the primary entrance to each room lawfully used for sleeping purposes?
- » Do you have at least one operable carbon monoxide alarm?
- » Are all electrical cords in good condition (not frayed or cracked)?
- » Are all electrical cords in the open, not run under rugs or through doorways?
- » Is your apartment free from storage of flammable products such as gasoline or propane?
- » Are space heaters placed at least three feet from combustibles?
- » Are space heaters plugged directly into wall sockets and not into extension cords?
- » Is your apartment door fireproof and/or self-closing?
- » Is your fire escape window clear and unobstructed?
- » If you have a security gate, is it FDNY approved?
- » Can all windows be opened easily from the inside?
- » Are building stairways free of storage and rubbish?
- » Are stairway fire doors fireproof and self-closing?
- » Are stairway fire doors kept closed?
- » Are exit lights in the stairway in good working order?
- » Do you have a working fire extinguisher on hand?
- » Do you have operable flashlights handy?
- » Do you have a fire escape plan?



Fire & Emergency Safety:

What residents need to know to prepare and respond

Whether you live in a condo, co-op, or rental building, multifamily living brings unique safety risks. As your managing agent, we cannot stress enough the importance of your household members and visitors knowing exactly what to do in the event of a fire or other evacuation-related emergency. This knowledge can save lives.

We strongly encourage all residents to watch our tactics to help you and your loved ones stay safe in the event of an emergency.

What we cover:

- Fire prevention & evacuation planning | Best practices for multifamily living
- Reducing your risk | Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- The difference between non-combustible (fireproof) and combustible (non-fireproof) buildings
- Safety best practices for lithium-ion batteries
- Importance of homeowners or renters insurance

Missed our webinar for residents in our managed properties?

We encourage you to watch it in full by clicking [here](#).

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