



Fire Department, City of New York  
**FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION**

Bill De Blasio, Mayor  
Daniel A. Nigro, Fire Commissioner

#7

**RESIDENTIAL  
APARTMENT BUILDING  
FIRE SAFETY**

***Fire safety begins in your own apartment!  
Is your family fire safe?  
Protect yourself, your family and your neighbors.***

**T**here are special areas of concern when it comes to fire safety in apartment buildings. Families in apartment buildings live close together; affecting each other's risks associated with fire. While the chances of a fire starting in an apartment are about the same as in a private home, apartment fires have the potential to spread fire, heat and smoke throughout the building affecting the safety of all occupants.



Smoke Alarms Save Lives

Carbon Monoxide Alarms Save Lives

Smoke Alarms Save Lives

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NY**

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## 1. KNOW YOUR EXITS

There must be two means of egress (exits) from your apartment building.

Your **primary or first exit** is your apartment door that leads into either an unenclosed (not separated by walls and doors) stairway or through a public hallway to an enclosed stairway that leads to the street.

Your **secondary exit** should be one of the following, depending upon the building's date of construction that also leads directly or indirectly (through a yard) to the street level:

- ☐ an additional enclosed stairway accessible from the public hallway. (newer buildings)
- ☐ an enclosed fire tower (stairway accessible from the public hallway).
- ☐ an outside fire-escape accessible from within your apartment through a window or door.

An elevator is never an acceptable means of exit during a fire.

## 2. KEEP YOUR EXITS CLEAR AND WORKING

Properly maintained fire doors and exits will greatly reduce your chance of being killed or injured in a fire in your building.

☐ Maintain your apartment door or doors leading into the public hall or vestibule as fireproof and self-closing. (tampering with the self-closing hinge or blocking the self-closing of such door is illegal).

☐ Make sure your apartment door lock can be opened from the inside with a thumb turn. (without the use of a key).

☐ Maintain doors leading from the public hallway into the stairway or fire tower as fire proof and self-closing. (again, tampering with the self-closing hinge or blocking the self-closing of such door is illegal.)

☐ Keep stairways and outside fire escapes free of obstructions at all time. Do not store anything such as baby strollers, bicycles or rubbish on or under stairways or on stairway landings.



## 3. SECURITY VS. FIRE SAFETY

### Window Security Gates

Some people install security bars or gates on their apartment windows to prevent intruders from entering their home. However, in the event of a fire, doing so may trap you and your family, as well as inhibit firefighter rescue.

If your apartment building has an outside fire escape, only New York City Fire Department approved security gates that open without the use of a key may be installed on the fire escape window. This requirement also applies to any secondary exit window on the grade level. Installation of an unapproved gate is strictly prohibited in NYC.

FDNY approved gates do not require the use of a tool, a key, or special effort to open. When purchasing a security gate be sure that it is stamped or labeled with the FDNY approval number.

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 New York City Health Code requires owners of multiple dwellings to install child safety window guards when a child ten years old or younger lives in the apartment. The window guards are small barriers installed to protect children from falling out of the windows.

However, to help ensure your safety during a fire, these guards must not be installed on your fire escape window.

**SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES!**

## 4. KNOW YOUR WAY OUT

Owners of residential apartment buildings with three or more dwelling units are required by the NYC Fire Code to develop a Fire Safety Plan specific for their building. The plan must contain basic fire safety tips, and information about the 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.

### The owner is required by law to:

- ☐ post the fire safety plan on the inside of every apartment front door.
- ☐ post the fire safety plan in a conspicuous space in the common area.
- ☐ distribute a copy to each dwelling unit in the building.
- ☐ provide a copy to new tenants at the time of the lease.
- ☐ re-distribute the fire safety plan annually during fire prevention week.

The evacuation portion of your building's fire safety plan will depend whether your building is fire proof or non-fireproof, and if the fire is in your apartment or some other portion of the building.

## 5. SHOULD YOU STAY OR SHOULD YOU GO?

### A

**If the fire IS IN your apartment, regardless of construction type,**

- ☐ Get everyone out. Stay low as you go.
- ☐ Use your safest and most accessible exit.
- ☐ CLOSE ALL DOORS as you leave.
- ☐ If using an interior stairway, alert people on your floor by knocking on their doors on your way out.
- ☐ DO NOT USE THE ELEVATOR.
- ☐ Call 911 once you reach a safe location.

### B

If you live in a **NON- FIREPROOF BUILDING** and there is a fire, it is usually better (safer) to leave the building immediately.

#### **Fireproof does not mean that the building is immune to fire.**

While the structural components may not catch on fire, the contents will and generate life threatening heat and smoke.

Generally speaking, in a fire-proof building the fire and smoke will be contained to the portion of the building (apartment) where the fire has started.

### C

If you live in a **FIREPROOF BUILDING** and there is a fire, it is usually better (safer) to:

- ☐ Stay inside rather than entering smoke-filled hallways. If the fire is on a floor below your apartment you may be caught by rising heat and smoke in the stairways. If the fire is above your apartment there is less danger in leaving but also less of a reason to leave as the smoke and heat are above you.
- ☐ Keep your door CLOSED.
- ☐ Seal the door with duct tape or wet sheets and towels. Seal ventilators and any other openings where smoke may enter.
- ☐ Turn off air conditioners.
- ☐ Unless flames or smoke are coming from below, open your windows a few inches at the top or bottom. Don't break windows; they may need to be closed later.
- ☐ Call the Fire Department with your apartment number and description of the conditions in your apartment. Firefighters will be directed to your location.



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