



# Danger Above

## A Factsheet on Highrise Fire Safety

**R**ecent fatal fires in highrise structures have prompted Americans to rethink fire safety. A key to fire safety for those who live and work in these special structures is to practice specific highrise fire safety and prevention behaviors.

The U. S. Fire Administration (USFA), a part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, would like you to know there are simple fire safety steps you can take to prevent the loss of life and property in highrise fires.

### BE PREPARED FOR A HIGHRISE FIRE EMERGENCY

- Never lock fire exits or doorways, halls or stairways. Fire doors provide a way out during the fire and slow the spread of fire and smoke. Never prop stairway or other fire doors open.
- Learn your building evacuation plan. Make sure everyone knows what to do if the fire alarm sounds. Plan and practice your escape plan together.
- Be sure your building manager posts evacuation plans in high traffic areas, such as lobbies.
- Learn the sound of your building's fire alarm and post emergency numbers near all telephones.
- Know who is responsible for maintaining the fire safety systems. Make sure nothing blocks these devices and promptly report any sign of damage or malfunction to the building management.

### DO NOT PANIC IN THE EVENT OF A HIGHRISE FIRE EMERGENCY

- Do not assume anyone else has already called the fire department.
- Immediately call your local emergency number. Early notification of the fire department is important. The dispatcher will ask questions regarding the emergency. Stay calm and give the dispatcher the information they request.

### IF THE DOOR IS WARM TO THE TOUCH

Before you try to leave your apartment or office, feel the door with the back of your hand. If the door feels warm to the touch, do not attempt to open it. Stay in your apartment or office.

- Stuff the cracks around the door with towels, rags, bedding or tape and cover vents to keep smoke out.
- If there is a phone in the room where you are trapped, call the fire department again to tell them exactly where you are located. Do this even if you can see fire apparatus on the street below.
- Wait at a window and signal for help with a flashlight or by waving a sheet.
- If possible, open the window at the top and bottom, but do not break it, you may need to close the window if smoke rushes in.
- Be patient. Rescuing all the occupants of a highrise building can take several hours.

### IF THE DOOR IS NOT WARM TO THE TOUCH

- If you do attempt to open the door, brace your body against the door while staying low to the floor and slowly open it a crack. What you are doing is checking for the presence of smoke or fire in the hallway.
- If there is no smoke in the hallway or stairwells, follow your building's evacuation plan.

- If you don't hear the building's fire alarm, pull the nearest fire alarm "pull station" while exiting the floor.
- If you encounter smoke or flames on your way out, immediately return to your apartment or office.

### AFTER A HIGHRISE FIRE EMERGENCY

- Once you are out of the building, STAY OUT! Do not go back inside for any reason.
- Tell the fire department if you know of anyone trapped in the building.
- Only enter when the fire department tells you it is safe to do so.

### MAINTAIN AND INSTALL WORKING SMOKE ALARMS

No matter where you live, always install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

Remember, fire safety is your personal responsibility... *Fire Stops With You!*

#### For more information contact:

The U. S. Fire Administration  
 16825 South Seton Avenue  
 Emmitsburg, MD 21727  
 or  
 Visit the USFA Web site:  
[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)



**Homeland Security**