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

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Salvatore J. Cassano, Commissioner

# RESIDENTAL APARTMENT BUILDING FIRE SAFETY

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

There 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**

A Public Fire Safety Message From The New York City Fire Department

FD NY

***YOUR SAFETY IS OUR MISSION***

PROUDLY SERVING NEW YORK SINCE 1865

English

## 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:

**o** an additional enclosed stairway accessible from the public hallway. (newer buildings)

**o** an enclosed fire tower (stairway accessible from the public hallway).

**o** 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.

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

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

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

**o** 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.

# LETS KEEP YOUR FAMILY FIRE SAFE

## 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.

## 4. KNOW YOUR WAY OUT

Owners of residential apartment buildings with three or more dwelling units are required by law (Local Law # 10 of 1999) 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:**

- **o** post the fire safety plan on the inside of every apartment front door.
- **o** post the fire safety plan in a conspicuous space in the common area.
- **o** distribute a copy to each dwelling unit in the building.
- **o** provide a copy to new tenants at the time of the lease.
- **o** 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 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 fireproof building the fire and smoke will be contained to the portion of the building (apartment) where the fire has started.

### B

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

- **o** Stay inside rather than entering smoke-filled hallways, especially if the fire is above your apartment.
- **o** Keep your door CLOSED.
- **o** Seal the door with duct tape or wet sheets and towels. Seal ventilators and any other openings where smoke may enter.
- **o** Turn off air conditioners.
- **o** 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.
- **o** Call the Fire Department with your apartment number and description of the conditions in your apartment. Firefighters will be directed to your location.

### C

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

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

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**SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES!**

# YOUR APARTMENT FIRE SAFETY CHECKLIST

**Prevention and planning is the 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 the potential hazard should be corrected to reduce your risk and increase your preparedness for fire.**

| YES | NO | |
|---|---|---|
| ❑ | ❑ | 1-Do you have at least one operable smoke alarm? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 2-Do you have at least one operable carbon monoxide alarm? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 3-Are all electrical cords in good condition? (not frayed or cracked) |
| ❑ | ❑ | 4-Are all electrical cords in the open, not run under rugs or through doorways? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 5-Is your apartment free from storage of flammable products such as gasoline or propane? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 6-Are space heaters placed at least three feet from combustibles? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 7-Are space heaters plugged directly into wall sockets and not into extension cords? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 8-Is your apartment door fireproof and self-closing? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 9-Is your fire escape window clear and unobstructed? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 10-If you have a security gate, is it FDNY approved? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 11-Can all windows be opened easily from the inside? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 12-Are building stairways free of storage and rubbish? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 13-Are stairway fire doors fireproof and self-closing? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 14-Are stairway fire doors kept closed? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 15-Are exit lights in the stairway in good working order? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 16-Do you have operable flashlights handy? |
| ❑ | ❑ | 17-Do you have a fire escape plan? |

**Immediately correct problems or hazards that are within your control or responsibility.**
**Notify the building owner of any others that are not.**
**If necessary, you may file a complaint by calling**
**the New York City Fire Department at 718-999-2533 or 311.**

*Dedicated in memory of*
Lieutenant Curtis W. Meyran
Firefighter John G. Bellew
Firefighter Richard T. Sclafani
January 23, 2005

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