



Fire Escape and Window Safety

A Balanced Approach

The decrease in residential fire injury and deaths over the last decade reveals that the approaches implemented by injury prevention groups are working. Windows, in particular, play a vital role in home fire safety. This is why the window and door industry formed the Window Safety Task Force: to educate homeowners about the use of windows for fire escape and rescue and to educate caregivers about preventing child falls from windows. According to building codes, every bedroom must have a secondary means of escape in case fire or smoke is blocking the primary exit. A window of sufficient size to allow escape would cover this requirement; however, merely providing a window isn't enough. It is important that when it is necessary to escape from a fire, everyone in the family knows what to do.

The best way to help ensure a safe escape is to plan and practice. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) "Sparky the Fire Dog" program offers free information about home fire escape planning and identifying home hazards and offers activities for children to learn this same information. The NFPA also offers an entire series of classroom aids. Ensuring that windows can be easily opened by children and other occupants during a fire escape is a crucial part of fire safety.

The Window Safety Task Force works in conjunction with the National Safety Council (NSC) and other safety advocates, including the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Safe Kids Worldwide, and the International Code Council (ICC). The NSC web site includes kids' activity sheets as well as tips for parents and caregivers.

While windows are a key part of the home fire escape plan, it is important to remember the possibility of window falls. Open windows pose a potential hazard, especially to unsupervised, young children. Keeping children away from open windows or using the upper sash of a window to provide fresh air are all simple ways to reduce the potential of child falls. In addition, furniture such as chairs, beds and sofas should never be placed below or next to windows. Unattended children can quickly use these articles as climbing aids to reach an open window. Also remember that insect screens are intended to keep insects out - they are neither designed nor intended to keep children from falling out of windows.

The National Safety Council (NSC) and the window and door industry strive to increase public awareness about how to help prevent child falls from windows and how to properly use windows to escape from a fire in the home. Part of this effort includes the designation of National Window Safety Week, which is scheduled each year as the last week of April. This is timed to coincide with spring—the time of year when homeowners are again opening their windows.

The message of Window Safety Week is designed to educate caregivers about ways to help prevent window falls while also discussing the lifesaving role windows serve as a means of emergency escape and rescue in a fire.

The CPSC also recommends the appropriate use of window fall prevention devices like window guards to help reduce the chance of child window falls. Industry standards for these devices provide requirements for features such as releases that allow for escape during fires. Therefore, it is important that any window guards used to prevent child falls comply with these standards.

Clearly, a balanced approach to window safety and fire escape is necessary. Prepare and practice your fire escape plan, and apply window fall safety tips to help protect your children.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.nsc.org/windowsafetytaskforce>

www.sparky.org

<http://www.iccsafe.org/safety>

www.safekids.org

www.cpsc.gov

The Window Safety Task Force is sponsored by American Architectural Manufacturers Association, National Safety Council, Screen Manufacturers Association, Window and Door Manufacturers Association, as well as window and door manufacturers.



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