



**GWINNETT COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES AND
*Fire Station #4 - Proudly Serving
Peachtree Corners – November 2016***

PRACTICE HOME FIRE SAFETY

Recent fire deaths bring to light the importance of following proper home fire Safety

The topic of home fire prevention and safety has never been more important than it is right now. The Gwinnett County Department of Fire and Emergency Services is encouraging all residents to learn about and follow proper home fire safety practices. Along with the onset of cold weather and increased risk due to festive decorations and holiday cooking, firefighters will see an increase of reported residential fires due to home heating appliances, unattended candles and careless smoking.

The recent fire deaths in Gwinnett County and across the state of Georgia are grim reminders of the danger and potentially tragic outcome when a home fire strikes. Keep your home and family safe by incorporating fire safety as part of your daily routine.

Fire related deaths in Gwinnett County are listed in the below table:

YEAR:	NUMBER OF FIRE DEATHS:
2011	7
2012	3
2013	3
2014	5
2015	0
2016	12 <i>(there were a total of 7 fire deaths in the county prior to the fatal Post Oak fire. The number 12 will be confirmed based on results from the Medical Examiner's Office)</i>

Every home should be equipped with working smoke alarms on every level, in the hallway outside the sleeping area, in each of the bedrooms and in the basement. A working smoke alarm cuts the chances of dying in a home fire in half. The more smoke alarms you have the better. Smoke alarms should be tested monthly and the batteries should be replaced twice a year. A smoke alarm that is 10-years or older should be replaced.

It's also a good idea to have a home fire escape plan and practice fire drills regularly with the entire family. Know at least two ways out and keep exit pathways clear of obstructions. Homeowners should keep a multi-purpose ABC (*dry-chemical*) portable fire extinguisher close at hand to douse small

fires. Being prepared and knowing what to do when a fire strikes can spell the difference between life and death. Be sure to look for and eliminate home hazards that could cause a fire to start or that may intensify the flames once a fire breaks out.

There are basic fire facts that most people don't know. Knowing them could save your life:

1. **FIRE IS DARK** – Expect not to see in a fire due to acrid and bitter smoke. Dense smoke quickly rises to the ceiling, then spreads across the room and mushrooms back to the floor. Smoke can fill a room or hallway in a matter of seconds. To survive, get low and get out. Two ways out may include a door or window. Be sure to provide a collapsible fire escape ladder for the second floor. It may be the only means of escape, especially if the stairwell is blocked by smoke or flames.
2. **FIRE IS HOT** – The heat in a room can build quickly when a fire breaks out. Hot air rises to the ceiling, and then spreads across the room before thermal layering back to the floor. The hottest air and gases will be toward the ceiling. The temperature can reach hundreds of degrees at the ceiling and at head level if standing. To survive, crawl low on the floor to escape the smoke and the heat. Go to the nearest door or window and get out fast.
3. **SMOKE AND GAS ARE THE NUMBER ONE KILLER** – Smoke and gas are the number one killer in a fire. There are several toxic gases given off in a fire, depending on the material burning. No matter what's burning, there will always be carbon monoxide. The carbon monoxide mixed in the smoke will knock you unconscious and often kills within a matter of moments and seconds in a fire. To survive, stay low to the floor and cover your mouth and nose. Crawl to the nearest door or window and get out fast. Remember that a human being can't smell in their sleep. The smell of smoke will not wake you up. The presence of a smoke alarm is critical to early warning and safe escape. Have a meeting place outside the house, so everyone knows where to go for accountability. Once out, don't go back inside. Call 9-1-1 from outside the burning building or a neighbor's house.
4. **TIME IS YOUR ENEMY IN A FIRE** – Time is your enemy in a fire. Simply put, there is "no time" when a fire breaks out. According to fire experts, you may have 2-minutes or less to escape a burning home. Fire travels in moments and in seconds. Remember that the dense smoke and superheated air will quickly fill a room or corridor ahead of an advancing fire. Be prepared to exit the home quickly when the smoke alarm sounds or when you encounter smoke or heat from a fire. Never waste time in a fire. Get out and stay out.
5. **WHO LIVES AND WHO DIES IN A FIRE** – The matter of who lives and who dies in a fire is really up to each and every member of the household. How much do you know about fire and what to expect when a fire breaks out? How much do you know about surviving a fire? How much have you taught your family *(from oldest to youngest) about fire prevention and fire survival?* Prevention and education is the key to proper home fire safety.
6. **WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE TRAPPED** – If you are unable to quickly escape from upper floors during a home fire, try to get as far away from the fire as possible. Get as many closed doors between you and the fire as possible. A closed door may buy precious time in a fire. Stuff something like a sheet or blanket under the door and cover the cracks to keep smoke from entering the room you are in. Close or cover the HVAC vent in the room to slow the spread of

smoke. If available, use a wet towel to cover your face and stay low by the window in the room. Open the window and signal to firefighters with a bright colored garment or other object. Use a flashlight to help you see in the dark. Call 9-1-1 and give your location inside the home. Follow all instructions given by the emergency dispatcher. While dangerous, jumping from a two-story window as a last-ditch effort could save your life. If on the ground floor, GET OUT FAST and STAY OUT!

While not all fires are preventable, all fire injuries and deaths are preventable by following proper fire safety practices. Never leave food on the stove unattended in the kitchen, Be sure to snuff out candles and the fireplace fire when leaving the home or before going to bed, keep space heaters away from combustible materials, have the fireplace and other home heating appliances checked annually by a qualified technician, keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children, keep anything combustible away from open flames, use fire resistive decorations and furnishings approved by an independent testing laboratory and lastly, Never smoke while sleepy or intoxicated. Make fire safety an important part of the day for your family.

The Gwinnett County Department of Fire and Emergency Services offers free fire prevention and life safety presentations for the community. For additional information on home fire safety or to schedule a fire safety presentation, please contact the Gwinnett Fire Community Risk Reduction Division at 678.518.4845 or e-mail fireprograms@gwinnettcountry.com.

