

NEWS RELEASE

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SUFFOLK FIREFIGHTERS PROMOTE HOME FIRE DRILL DAY

SUFFOLK, VA (October 11, 2016) Only 1 in 5 parents regularly practice fire escape plans at home and only half of parents report that their children know what to do in the event of a fire. Yet, home fires are the biggest disaster threat facing American families today with 9 in 10 structure fires occurring in the home and more than 8 in 10 fire-related deaths resulting from home fires.

To raise awareness of this issue and encourage families to be more prepared when it comes to fire safety, Suffolk Fire & Rescue has partnered with Nationwide's Make Safe Happen program to launch a new national observance day – Home Fire Drill Day – on October 15th. Home Fire Drill Day will occur on the last day of the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Fire Prevention Week (October 9-15).

This is the first time that like-minded parties from the public and private sector are collaborating on this single, life-saving call to action. Home Fire Drill Day tips include:

- Prepare for the practice by drawing out a plan based on the exits around the home.
- Pick a family safety spot that's near your home and a safe distance away.
- Test your smoke alarms with your kids so they know what the beep sounds like.
- For children under six years old, assign an adult to help them.
- Use a timer to ensure everyone is at the safety spot in two minutes or less; this is how much time a family has to safely exit the house in the event of a fire.

“When a fire happens at home, children can become frightened and hide; that is the last thing we want our children or anyone for that matter to do” says Pam King, Suffolk Fire & Rescue’s Public Educator / Fire Investigator. “It is our hope that by practicing for these emergencies, by educating our children, we can save lives and even have a little fun while doing it.”

By nature, simulating an emergency like a fire drill can be scary, but by infusing fun into the at-home practice, parents can help their kids feel safer should a fire actually happen. “From experience we have found that most children know what to do, they just cannot hear the alarm if one is not in the bedroom where they sleep. 2:00 in the morning with smoky conditions is not the time to learn if they hear the alarm or know how to escape.” With the help of expert partners, Nationwide’s Make Safe Happen program has developed a series of interactive fire drill games available at HomeFireDrillDay.com that parents can play with their children – from racing the clock, to practicing in the dark or to crawling out of the house as quickly as possible.

Suffolk Fire & Rescue encourages everyone in the community to participate in Home Fire Drill Day on October 15th and to make it an annual tradition. For more information, contact the Suffolk Fire Marshal’s office at 514-4550, or email fireprevbureau@suffolkva.us.

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