

How to Survive a Fire in a Crowded Place

If you're planning to attend a celebration during this holiday season, will you be able to get out safely should a fire unexpectedly erupt while you're busy celebrating? It's important to give thought to the possibility that trying to get out of a crowded place in an emergency could instantly become a matter of life and death.

If you haven't, now is the time to be prepared for that kind of emergency:

- 1. As soon as you get to your designated place, familiarize yourself with where all of the exits are. Don't just glance in the direction of the exits. Actually walk the path to at least one of those exits from where you will be standing or sitting. Remember, the power will likely go out from the fire. The possibility of becoming disoriented in the dark or from smoke inhalation is extremely high. It's crucial that you know in which direction to hurry to as soon as a fire erupts.
- 2. Wear non-flowing clothing and practical shoes. Keep any laces tied to prevent tripping.
- 3. Don't stop to collect your possessions (e.g., purse, clothing, shoes). Leave them behind and get out! Prevent getting knocked down at all costs.
- 4. Should a stampede situation develop as celebration-goers surge for the nearest exit, turn in the direction of an alternate exit, such as the back door or a window you can throw a chair through if necessary to make your escape.
- 5. Take care when negotiating staircases, ramps and elevated flooring. The force of a moving crowd can become impossible to manage, causing you to trip, fall and possibly be trampled.
- 6. Stay as calm as possible as you try to exit the venue, taking care not to push those in front of you. The last thing you want to do is knock down anyone in front of you, which will cause you to trip and fall on them. The situation becomes extremely dangerous when people find themselves piled on top of one another, unable to continue moving.
- 7. If others in the venue begin to panic, your best bet is to avoid being in the center of the stampede. Keep your legs and arms moving at a diagonal to the direction the crowd is rush towards. Try to drift yourself to the outside where the body flow will be weaker.
- 8. If you happen to fall, get up as quickly as you can. If you can't, reach for someone, or grab their clothes, to pull yourself up to your feet. If you aren't able to get up, try to maneuver yourself by crawling in the same direction as the crowd.
- 9. Let someone at home or a non-attending friend know where you will be, just to be on the safe side. If an emergency like a fire should happen while you are at the event, someone on the outside will know where you are to notify authorities and/or try to find you.