

How To...

Survive A Hotel Fire

Most travel plans include stopovers at hotels and motels. The National Safety Council advises travelers to follow a few simple steps when staying away from home that can help prevent tragedy if there is a fire at your lodging.

Check The Exits

Surviving a hotel fire begins right after you check in. When you get to your room take a few moments to check out possible escape routes.

Walk down the corridor and find the fire exits. Remember, never use the elevator in a fire—the call buttons may take you to a floor filled with smoke or flames.

Check the exits out to make sure they are usable! Do the doors open? Are the stairways clear?

Count the doorways and any other features between your room and the exits. If the corridor is dark and full of smoke, you'll need to know your way as you crawl along the wall to the exit.

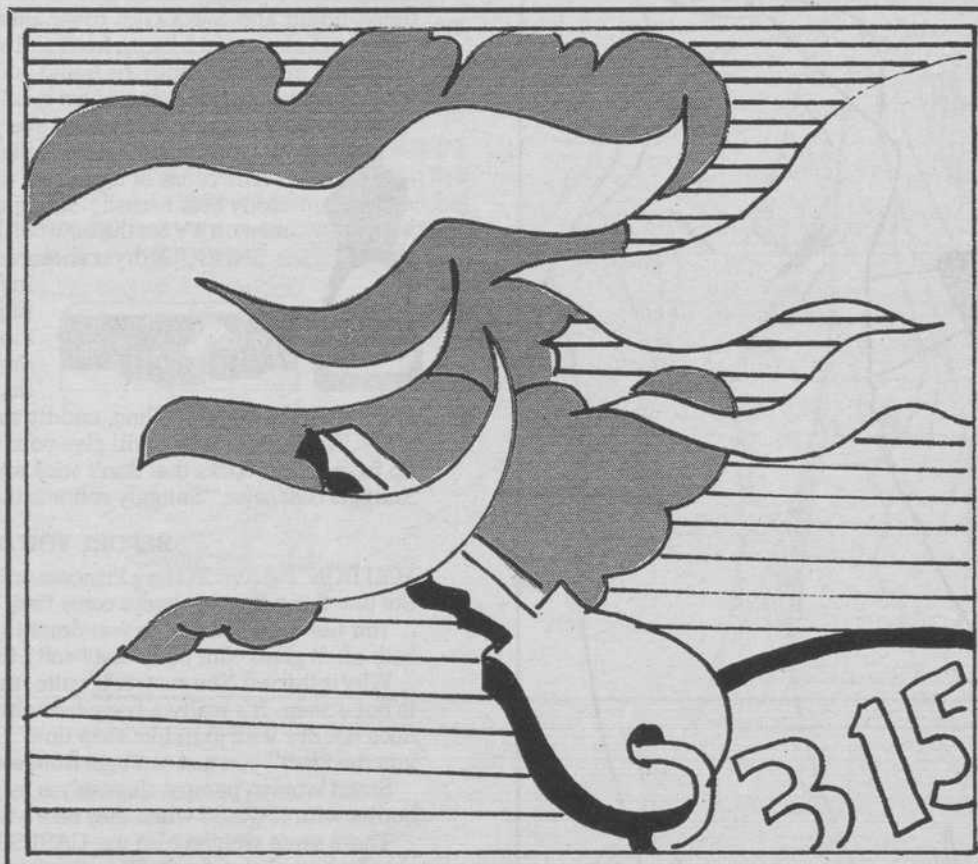
If the hotel has a fire alarm system, find the nearest fire alarm. Be sure you know how to use it. You may have to activate it in the dark or dense smoke.

Check Your Room

It's important to know the layout of your room because you may have to stay in it if smoke in the corridor cuts off your escape. Many people have lived through a hotel fire by remaining in their rooms protected against smoke and gases while awaiting rescue.

Begin by putting your room key close to where you sleep so you can find it easily. You will need it to get back into your room if smoke or fire blocks your exit. You may want to keep it in your pants pocket or on the night stand.

Try the windows. Do they open? How do the latches work? Which one would you use in an emergency?



Look out the window to see what's outside. Is escape possible? You may be only a few feet from the ground and you can get out this way if the hall is not usable. If you are on an upper floor, there may be a roof or deck within safe dropping distance. Dropping from more than two floors usually results in injury.

Fire! Fire!

If a fire begins in your room, report it to the telephone operator immediately and then only try to put it out if you're sure you can handle it. If you are at all in doubt, get out of your room and close the door behind you to keep smoke and flames out of the corridor. Sound the alarm and arouse your neighbors.

If the fire starts in another part of the building, you will probably be aroused by an alarm, yelling in the corridor, a phone call or the sound of fire engines outside.

Here's what to do in easy steps—

1. Grab your key and make for the door. If there is any evidence of smoke in the room, roll out of your bed and crawl to the door. Don't stand; smoke and deadly gases rise.

2. Feel the door with the palm of your hand. If the door or knob is hot—don't open it. (Read below to find out what to do.) If the door is **not** hot, open slowly and be ready to slam it shut if necessary.

3. Check the hall. If everything is clear, walk to the nearest exit. If there is any smoke in the corridor, crawl into the hallway. Close the door behind you to protect your belongings. Stay close to the wall so you can count the doorways to the exit. If the nearest exit or stairway is blocked, use the alternate one. Remember, don't use the elevator.

4. Walk down to the ground level. Fires generate heat, smoke—and panic, so hold onto the handrail for guidance and protection against being knocked down by exiting occupants. If fire or smoke is dense at

lower levels, turn around and walk up to clearer air or to the roof if it is accessible.

What To Do If Room Door Is Hot Or Smoke Is Dense In Hall

1. Open window to vent room if there is any smoke. If you are on first or second floor you may be able to drop to ground safely. If you are up any higher, you are usually better off staying put. Although some people survive jumps from 35 feet or more, they are usually seriously injured.

2. Let someone know you are in room. If the phone works, call for help. Hang a bed sheet out the window to signal fire-fighters, but don't try to climb down.

3. Fill the tub with water. It might be needed for fire fighting. Turn on the bathroom fan if it helps to clear your room of smoke.

4. Wet towels and sheets. You'll need them to put around doors and cracks if smoke seeps in. Use your ice bucket to bail water.

5. Get fresh air. Make a tent over your head with a blanket at a slightly opened window to get fresh air. If the windows do not open, you may have to break one out with a chair or drawer. If heat and flames are rising outside the window from a lower floor, don't breathe smoke-laden air.

6. Finally, if your room becomes untenable, you may be forced to make for the best exit, but remember to keep low.

Remember that few people are burned to death in fires. Most people die from smoke, poisonous gases and panic. Panic is usually the result of not knowing what to do. If you have an escape plan and adapt it to the emergency, you can greatly increase your chances of survival.

An Added Tip: It's a good idea to always pack a flashlight in your suitcase. You may need it to guide yourself through smoke or darkness.