



Government
of South Australia

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN METROPOLITAN FIRE SERVICE



HOME FIRE & LIFE SAFETY INFORMATION

Fire safety awareness in multi-storey residential buildings

All occupants residing within multi-storey apartment-style buildings should know what to do in the event of a fire and know how to get out of the building safely.

Be prepared

- Ensure smoke alarms are installed in your apartment to provide reasonable early warning to occupants in sleeping areas to alert them to the presence of a fire. Ideally smoke alarms should be installed in every living area and bedroom, including hallways.
- Liaise with the building management group to determine whether you have a monitored fire alarm system or whether each apartment has independent smoke alarms installed.
- Monitored fire alarms or smoke detectors connected to the Fire Service via a fire indicator panel should not be interfered with by occupants of apartments. Occupants should report any concerns or faults immediately to the building management group.
- Smoke alarms should be tested monthly by pushing the 'test button' until the smoke alarm sounds. They need to be cleaned at least every six months with a soft brush attachment on a vacuum cleaner. Any replaceable backup batteries should be replaced every year, when turning clocks back at the end of daylight-saving is a good time.
- Liaise with the building management group to find out what fire evacuation procedures they have in place. Incorporate this information into the development of your own escape plan. Practise your escape plan with all occupants of your residence.
- Respond immediately when alerted to a fire in your building.
- Liaise with the property management group and other residents to organise an evacuation drill at least once a year.
- Front doors of units are typically fire rated and should not be altered.
- Know the locations of all fire exit doors in case the one closest to you is blocked. Exits will be identified by an illuminated green and white sign. Your building may only have one exit.
- Never use wedges or doorstoppers, or chock open stairway or apartment doors, as this allows smoke and flames to enter.
- Fire stair doors and external apartment doors are designed to self-close every time. Report any malfunctions with these doors to your building management immediately.
- Know where fire extinguishers and hose reels, if installed, are placed throughout the building and familiarise yourself with the operating instructions.
- Never interfere with fire safety equipment. For example, do not use sprinklers as hanging points; do not paint or disable smoke alarms.
- Never use stairways for storage, even for a short time.

- Consider purchasing and installing a fire blanket. Know how to use it before an emergency arises.
- Know your neighbours. Be aware of neighbours who may need help getting out in an emergency. Offer them your contact details in case of emergency.
- Damage to sprinkler heads, excessive smoke from the kitchen or steam from the bathroom are major causes of unwanted alarm activations in residential high-rise buildings. Charges may apply for unwanted alarm activations in buildings that are connected directly and are monitored by the Fire Service.

In the event of a fire

- Do not use lifts as they are not smoke or fire proof and may stop if the power goes out. Use stairs to evacuate in a fire emergency.
- Ensure you have your apartment key or access card with you, as there may be a need to return to your apartment if the exit path becomes blocked.
- Close the door of your apartment as you evacuate to slow the spread of smoke and fire.
- Try to alert neighbours as you evacuate.
- Get down low and stay below the level of the smoke while you evacuate.
- Call 000 as soon as you are clear of immediate danger.
- People with a mobility impairment, e.g. those with a disability, frail elderly, children, will need assistance to descend stairs. If no assistance is available, they should wait on stairway landings for Fire Service rescue, allowing room for others to pass during the evacuation.
- If you cannot help neighbours or other residents evacuate, let the emergency services know where they are.
- Never re-enter a building until the all-clear is given by the Fire Service.

If you are unable to escape

- If you are unable to escape via the fire stairs, return to your apartment, close doors and windows and stuff wet towels or sheets around any open gaps or cracks to keep the smoke out. Call 000, advise the Fire Service of your location and follow the advice given by the Fire Service.
- If safe to do so, open an outside window slightly and using a brightly coloured cloth or a torch during non-daylight time, try to signal your location including floor level and apartment number. If smoke is coming in through the open window you must close it immediately.

Fire prevention

- Put only approved articles in the garbage chute - no flammable liquids, oily rags or burning or hot materials.
- Reduce clutter on balconies and ensure BBQs and heaters are ideally at least two metres from all other objects. Always turn BBQs and heaters off when they are unattended.
- Ensure any smokers in your residence thoroughly extinguish cigarette butts before disposing in metal garbage bins or chutes.
- Report any fire safety issues to building management immediately. For example, report exit signs not working, stairway doors not fully closing, smoke alarms not working and exits that are partially or totally locked or blocked.

Combine the above safety tips with the installation of well maintained, photo-electric [smoke alarms](#) in your home that are less than 10 years old. Consider having all your smoke alarms interconnected.

For more information call the Community Safety & Resilience Department 8204 3611
Country callers 1300 737 637
email SAMFScommunitysafety@sa.gov.au
visit our website www.mfs.sa.gov.au
or call in to 99 Wakefield Street, Adelaide during business hours.
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