

Tri County EMS Association Safety Guides



Window Safety Tips

A child's fall from a window is a tragic occurrence. Sadly, several such tragedies have occurred this summer across the country.

Windows, however, also play a vital role in home safety, serving as a secondary escape route in the event of a fire or other emergency. The Window Safety Task Force of the National Safety Council reminds parents that windows play a vital role in home fire safety, but they can also pose a risk of a fall in the home if other safety measures are not followed.

Recognizing the important role windows play in emergencies, legislators throughout the United States have mandated building codes requiring that specific windows be designated as points of escape. The size and placement of windows designated as points of escape in a residence are also governed by building codes. The ability to easily open windows and remove insect screens without special knowledge or tools is critical to safely escape through a window.

Window Safety Checklist

Fires and falls of all kinds are among the leading causes of injury and death in young children. While some falls occur from windows, it is important to realize that in the event of a fire, a window can also save a child's life. This is why windows play a critical role in home safety. **Print out this checklist** and use these tips to help keep your family safer around the windows and patio doors in your home.

Has your family developed an emergency fire escape plan?

Determine your family's emergency escape plan and practice it regularly. In the plan, include two avenues of escape from every room. Remember children may have to rely on a window to escape a fire. Help them learn to safely use a window under these circumstances. Make sure you have identified a safe meeting place outside.

Do you keep windows shut when children are around?

You should keep your windows closed and locked when children are around. When opening windows for ventilation, open windows that children cannot reach. Also, set and enforce rules about keeping children's play away from windows and/or patio doors. Falling through the glass can be fatal or cause a serious injury.

Do you leave, or have you left, windows open because you thought the insect screen provided a safeguard from a fall?

Don't rely on insect screens to prevent a fall. Insect screens are designed to provide ventilation while keeping insects out; they are not designed to, nor will they prevent a child's fall from a window.

Is there furniture placed under or near windows in your home?

Keep furniture - or anything children can climb - away from windows. Children may use such objects as a climbing aid.

Do any windows in your home have guards, security bars, grilles or grates?

These windows are useless in an emergency if the devices on them do not have a functioning release mechanism. Time is critical when escaping a fire. Consult your local fire department or building code official to determine proper window guard placement.

Inspect your home's windows carefully. Are any windows in your home painted or nailed shut?

Never paint or nail windows shut. You must be able to open them to escape in an emergency.

Do you have any window unit air conditioners in bedroom windows or other windows in your home that may be needed for escape or rescue in an emergency?

Do not install window unit air conditioners in windows that may be needed for escape or rescue in an emergency. The air conditioning unit could block or impede escape through the window. Always be sure that you have at least one window in each sleeping and living area that meets escape and rescue requirements.

Did you know that strategic landscaping may lessen the extent of injury sustained in the event a fall does occur?

Plant shrubs and soft edging like wood chips or grass under windows to cushion potential falls. The surface can greatly affect the degree of injury sustained from a fall.