Nearly 41,000 fires occurred in Ohio in 2011, resulting in 1,455 injuries and 128 deaths. Fires can happen anytime, and it is important to be prepared. Without a fire safety plan in place, when a disaster occurs, pets are often left behind. October is National Fire Prevention Month—a perfect time to create or review a fire safety plan for your whole family, including pets.

Creating an escape plan that includes your pets will help you remain calm in a real emergency.

- Create an escape plan, with at least two ways out of every room. Have practice fire drills that are as realistic as possible to help prevent your pets from becoming confused in a real fire.
- Know your pets’ hiding places so you know where to find them if they get scared when a fire occurs.
- Assemble an evacuation kit for your pets, including leashes, carriers for small animals, and basic first aid items. Make sure it’s easily accessible.
- Invest in a fire-proof safe for important documents, including your pets’ veterinary records.
- Post stickers to alert firefighters that pets are in the home. Include how many and what type of pets you have and place the stickers on your front door and/or window.
- Make sure your fire extinguishers are in working order and test your smoke detectors regularly, replacing batteries twice a year.
- Check with your local fire department to find out if they are equipped with pet oxygen mask kits.
- Microchip your pets so they may be identified in the event they run away during a fire emergency.

While some fires are out of your control, you can take steps to eliminate other risk factors around your home.

- Pet proof your house: look for areas where pets might be able to start fires accidentally. Make sure electrical cords are secured and out of your pets’ reach.
- Remove or cover stove knobs when not cooking. This is the number one way a pet can start a fire in your house.
- Keep flammable cleaners out of pets’ reach by securing them in protected cabinets. This also prevents your pet from eating potentially poisonous substances.
- Confine young pets when you can’t watch them closely. This will keep them away from hazards that might start a fire (such as knocking over a lit candle onto carpet). Never leave pets unattended around an open flame.

**FIRE FACTS**

In 2011, U.S. fire departments responded to a fire every 23 seconds, for an annual total of nearly 1.4 million. Each year, an estimated 40,000 pets die from smoke asphyxiation.

Only one-third of Americans have created and practiced a fire escape plan.

62% of home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

Properly functioning smoke detectors cut the risk of dying in a fire in half.

Cooking is the leading cause of reported home fires.

*Source: National Fire Protection Association (http://www.nfpa.org)*