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# MEDIA ALERT

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## **Fire Prevention Week Brings Reminder: Practice Your Escape Plan**

**RICHMOND, VIRGINIA:** – Do you have a fire escape plan? If yes, do you practice it at least twice a year? Does everyone in your household know what to do when they hear the sound of a smoke alarm?

These are just some of the questions fire departments throughout the state will be asking community members during Fire Prevention Week, October 7-13. The theme for this year's national fire safety public education and awareness campaign is "Practice Your Escape Plan." According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the majority of Americans have a fire escape plan, but most fail to practice it. In addition, the latest NFPA research shows that 3,030 people died in 2005 in home fires – that's roughly eight people every day. What does all of this mean? Being alerted to a fire and knowing what to do to escape from one are extremely important; however, only 23% of households have planned and practiced a home fire escape plan.

"Creating a home fire escape plan that is not shared with every member of the household or practiced by every member in the home is pointless," said W.G. Billy Shelton, Executive Director of the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. "To get the most value from your home escape plan, everyone in the home needs to practice the plan!"

Protect your family – create a home fire escape plan today. To get you started, the Virginia Department of Fire Programs recommends the following tips:

- Install working smoke alarms on every level of the home, especially outside of each sleeping area.

- Develop a fire escape plan that identifies two ways out of each room and a family safe meeting place outside.
- Make sure your plan allows for any specific needs in your household. If everyone knows what to do, everyone can get out quickly.
- Practice your plan at least twice a year.
- Some studies have shown that some children and adults may not awaken to the sound of a smoke alarm. Make sure everyone in the home knows what a smoke alarm sounds like when it is activated. If you find that a sounding alarm is not audible in certain areas in the home, particularly sleeping areas, consider installing a smoke alarm in each location.
- If the smoke alarm sounds: Go to your closest exit, and if there is smoke on your way out, turn and use your second way out. If you must exit through smoke, get low and go under the smoke to your exit. Do not take time to pick up belongings; just get out and help others get out. Move fast but stay calm. Remember, once out – stay out!

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