

## Article for January 21, 2015

It seems that tragedy strikes by threes, doesn't it? We were so shocked by the recent loss of one of our own, Mrs. Sunny Clouser, in a house fire earlier this month. Just days after her loss, Nassau Bay Fire Department, south of Houston, lost a retired firefighter when he didn't make it out of his house during a fire. Burleson County was affected by the third incident when two bodies were found inside a home destroyed by fire in Deanville, just south of Caldwell. Triple tragedies in just a few days.

Although we can't change what has happened, we CAN hope that we can help save someone else's life by sharing some vital information. Please note that this article is in no way intended to reflect what might have happened at any of the above-mentioned tragedies. It is only written to increase awareness of fires and encourage you to plan to get out alive, if that is possible.

According to the American Red Cross, fire experts agree that people only have about two minutes to escape a burning house. So, just imagine that you and your loved ones are sound asleep in the middle of the night when suddenly your smoke alarm starts blaring! Your house is filled with smoke! Do you know what to do? How long do you think it will take you to get out?

Let's consider some possibilities. Imagine that you are sleeping in a room that you normally do not sleep in, such as your child's room the night they aren't feeling well. Might it take you a little longer to get your bearings when you awaken quickly during the night? It's a possibility.

Do you have teenage children who sometimes invite their friends over once you have already gone to bed? Do you always know exactly how many people are sleeping in your home?

Does anyone who might be sleeping in your home have difficulty getting around by themselves, or does anyone need special equipment for walking or even breathing? How quickly can they get out of the house? Or how much time might it take someone else to assist them?

What about two ways out? Have you and your family made an escape plan that provides two ways out of every room, if possible. Make sure those two ways are always accessible.

Have you ever awakened to a smoke alarm? It might be worth a test for your family! Remember, too, to roll out of bed, staying low and low crawling to your exits. Smoke tends to rise, so the lower you are, the greater the chances are that you may be able to avoid the smoke.

Be sure to pick a safe meeting place outside and away from structures if possible. When you practice your home fire drill, be sure to practice meeting at your safe place.

Last, but not least, make sure everyone knows how to call '911', even young children. So, please create an escape plan, practice it, and Be Safe Out There!