



# Clallam County Fire District 3

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*Motto: Serve, Respect,  
Prevent and Protect*

## Fire Safety for Special Needs Children

Nine million or 13% of U.S. children under the age of 18, have a special health care need. Children with developmental disabilities, both physical and psychological, have higher rates of unintentional injury.

Additionally, there are 28 million deaf and hard of hearing Americans who are unable to rely on the warning sound of a smoke alarm to alert them of a fire.

Fire District 3 encourages all children to be taught fire safety and most importantly, all family members and caregivers should plan for a fire and practice fire safety skills regularly.

### Plan

Fire can occur at any time, in any place. Develop plans for children with special needs who may need to evacuate their home, school, church or other frequently visited locations. For children in wheelchairs, an accessible exit is critical. If they need help exiting the building, make sure they have more than one person identified and trained to assist them in the event of fire. Contact your child's school and learn your child's fire escape plan. Does this plan include help planned for your child?

If your child has any life-sustaining medical or mobility requirement, include steps in your plan to make sure that equipment is available after an evacuation.

If your child cannot clearly hear warning sounds and smoke alarms, consider installing a flashing smoke alarm on every level of your home and/or a vibrating smoke alarm where they sleep or rest.

### Teach

All children learn differently. Some may require pictures, sign language, verbal or physical repetition. Others may learn by touch or by modeling the behavior of others who practice fire safety techniques. Decide how your child learns best and tailor your teaching about fire safety and fire escape plans and other ways to stay safe during a fire using these methods.

Teach your child how to dial 9-1-1 and how to provide information for emergency personnel.

Teach your child to stay low in smoke. If they are unable to lower themselves to the ground to crawl, teach a responsible adult how to help them get to the floor and onto a blanket. The adult should also remain low in the smoke and use the blanket to pull the child through the building to safety. Another option for a child who cannot crawl is to teach them to use a scooter board to escape a dangerous situation.

If your child uses a wheelchair and their clothes or hair catch on fire, teach them how to lock their wheelchair, drop out of the wheelchair and onto the floor and to roll back and forth to smother the flames. If there is an adult present and the child or adult has a fire smothering blanket, this can also be used to smother the flames.

## Practice

Test all smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Contact us at 360-683-4242 for more information on smoke alarms for the hearing impaired, installation of regular smoke alarms and free home safety checks.

Make sure that children with disabilities are included in fire safety education at school and practice the information learned (in an adapted format) at home.

Practice a Home Fire Drill with your child at least twice a year.

Identify a person in your family who is responsible for helping your child with special needs escape in a fire. This person and a designated back-up person should regularly practice making a safe escape with your child.

Practice dialing 9-1-1 with your child to ensure that there is a plan in place to convey emergency information.

## Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) encourages the hearing impaired and special needs population and their caregivers to practice the following precautionary steps:

- ◆ For children in wheelchairs, an accessible exit is critical. The fire department should be notified of the presence of a child who has a disability in the home.
- ◆ Install a flashing or vibrating smoke alarm on every level of your home. Test all smoke alarms monthly and change batteries at least once a year.
- ◆ Make sure a TTY/TDD phone (if used) is next to your bed, within arm's reach. Keep emergency telephone numbers and hearing aids (if necessary) close by.
- ◆ Be sure to inform family members, the building manager, or a neighbor of your fire safety plan and practice it with them.
- ◆ Request emergency providers to keep your special needs information on file.

