Fire is fast. It only takes a few seconds to a few minutes before flames can engulf a building. Never assume you have time to do anything but gather the children and leave immediately.

Fire is hot. The heat of a fire is more deadly than the flames. The heat of a fire can rise to 600 degrees. The heat alone is deadly and can melt clothes to the skin.

Fire is dark. Once a fire starts, it quickly turns dark from thick, black smoke. It is the dark smoke that prevents you from seeing – and breathing.

Fire and fumes are deadly. Smoke and the toxic gases and fumes from fires are more deadly than the flames. Breathing these fumes is why people become incapacitated during a fire. If people are sleeping during a fire, the smoke and fumes are most likely what is deadly.

Are you and your child care provider prepared?

Your family and your child care provider must be prepared to act instantaneously in a fire. Here are some questions to ask yourself and your child care program:

- Are children adequately supervised at all times?
- Are 911 and other important emergency numbers posted by the phone and included in a mobile phone?
- Is there an emergency evacuation plan?
- Are fire drills conducted at least monthly?
- Is there a fully-stocked first-aid kit?
- Are all exits free of clutter and accessible for escape?
- Are electrical outlets covered?
- Are all electrical appliances and items with electrical cords out of reach of children? Are appliances like toasters unplugged when not in use?
Fire Safety at Home and In Child Care

Are electrical cords well maintained and not covered by rugs or other objects?
Are there at least two ways to exit every room or floor where children are in care?
Are windows of appropriate size and height from floor to serve as a second exit?
Are fireplaces, woodstoves or space heaters inaccessible to children?
Are cigarettes, matches, lighters and candles out of the reach of children?
Are there railings for stairs with three steps or more than a 24-inch rise?
Are hazardous materials like cleaning supplies, paints, kerosene, pesticides and alcohol properly stored in areas out of reach of children?
Are lint filters in clothes dryers cleaned after every use?
Are stoves and ovens turned off when not supervised by an adult, and knobs inaccessible to children?
Are smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers easy to reach and in working order?

Your child care provider should have a Fire Preparedness Plan that includes policies and procedures for preventing and responding to fires. Check your child care program:

Are there ramps for children with mobility issues, when appropriate?
Are doors fireproof in center-based care? Are doors free of flammable materials in family child care homes?
Are wall displays limited to no more than 20 percent flammable materials?

Ask your child care provider:

Do parents sign in and sign out their children so an accurate head count can be kept?
Can locks on doors be opened from both the inside and outside?

How will they evacuate children who are unable to understand directions or who cannot evacuate under their own power?
Is there a written emergency evacuation plan?
How will you be contacted in an emergency?
How can you contact the program if they evacuate the building?
What are the plans for alternative sites to pick up your child if the building is evacuated?

Make sure the contact information you gave your child care provider is current and includes back-up adult contacts if you cannot be reached in an emergency.

Do you have the necessary fire safety equipment and supplies?

Your home and your child’s provider should have the following equipment maintained and kept in working order—and you should know how to use them properly:

Smoke detectors: Smoke detectors are early warning detection devices that help alert occupants in case of a fire and have been proven to save lives. There should be a smoke detector on every level of a house. Child care programs require a
working smoke detector in each sleeping room. Smoke detectors should be installed high on ceilings or walls since smoke rises. They should not have anything covering or hanging from them, including paint, stickers, dust or mobiles. Test the smoke detector once a month by pushing the test button. If the smoke detector is battery-operated, replace the batteries twice each year.

- **Carbon monoxide detectors:** Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can build up to dangerous levels inside the home when fuel-burning devices are not properly ventilated, operated or maintained. Because it has no odor, color or taste, CO cannot be detected by our senses. Any home or child care program using natural gas should equip their program with a CO detector.

- **Fire extinguishers:** Fire extinguishers are not designed to fight a large or spreading fire. If a fire has already spread or engulfed a room, do NOT attempt to use the fire extinguisher. Get out of the building! Only use a fully loaded, operating fire extinguisher designated for the type of fire that exists. There should be an operable, non-expired, ABC-type fire extinguisher located in the kitchen and on each floor used by children that can handle different types of fires. Operating instructions should be posted near each extinguisher. Fire extinguishers need to be recharged after each use. Contact your local fire department about recharging a fire extinguisher.

- **Electrical outlet covers:** All electrical outlets should be covered with safety covers. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates about 3,900 injuries associated with electrical receptacle outlets are treated in emergency rooms each year. Approximately one-third of these injuries occur from children inserting metal objects, such as hair pins and keys, into the outlet. This can result in electric shock or burn injuries to hands or fingers.

- **Emergency evacuation kit:** Given that emergencies may occur and last longer than a brief time, the child care program should compile and have an easily accessible emergency evacuation or disaster kit.

**Do the children know what to do?**
Scared children are more likely to hide under a bed than to run outside. You and
your child care provider need to teach safety rules to children and then practice with them.

- **Fire drills**: Monthly practice with the children can be fun, but more importantly, it makes evacuation so routine that should it be needed in an emergency, everyone is prepared to get out quickly, orderly and safely.

- **Stop/drop/roll**: If their clothes catch on fire, tell young children not to run. Running fans the flames and makes the fire worse. Instead, teach children: Do not run! Stop, drop to the floor or ground, and roll around. This will put the fire out.

- **Stay low**: During a fire, smoke rises and makes it difficult to breathe. You must stay low to the floor while exiting the building, crawling if necessary.

Fire safety should be part of everyday experiences for children, whether they are in your home or a child care program. Have books about fire fighters and fire safety. Provide toys like fire trucks and fire hats and blocks and phones so children can practice responding to fires. Use songs to make rules automatic. Conduct regular fire drills. Visit your local fire department. Make fire safety a habit for your, your children and your child care provider.