

SAFETY CHECKUP

Plan For A Safe Escape

(NAPSA)—Despite your best prevention efforts, a home fire may still occur. At the first sign of smoke or fire, you must act calmly, carefully and quickly. This means you should develop an effective escape plan and practice it often to help you react appropriately in a fire emergency. Fire safety experts at The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc. point out that when you create your plan, be sure to include everyone in your family, as well as your pets. They offer these suggestions:

- **Plan two ways out of every room.** If fire blocks a primary exit, you will need a second way out. If you live in a two-story home, consider whether you will escape through a window, roof or balcony, and if you will need a portable fire escape ladder. Evaluate each escape route for ease of access, and eliminate clutter on stairs and in hallways.

Make sure windows are not blocked or painted shut. If you have window security bars, be sure they have quick-release mechanisms that everyone can operate. Locked doors should be easy to open from the inside.

It's usually easier to get out of a ground floor bedroom, especially for people who may have physical restrictions that limit their ability to escape. If you or family members have mobility difficulties, consider sleeping in ground floor rooms to get out more easily.

- **Establish a meeting place outside.** Safety experts at The



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Hartford suggest you select one location where everyone will meet after escaping so you can account for everyone and quickly notify firefighters if someone is missing. Choose an area away from the house, preferably in the front yard where firefighters will arrive. During a fire, do not allow anyone to go back into the house for any reason. If someone is missing, notify the firefighters, who are properly equipped to rescue people.

A free booklet called *Fire Sense: A Smart Way to Prevent, Detect and Escape Home Fires* is available by writing to: The Hartford, Fire Sense, 200 Executive Blvd., Southington, CT 06489 or by visiting www.thehartford.com/firesense.