



Sleepover Fire Safety For Kids

Is your child safe staying overnight at a friend's home? The City of Newton Fire Department offers a free Sleepover Checklist to help parents answer that age-old question, "Mom, can I sleep over at Dana's house?"

Think upset tummies and lack of sleep are the biggest risks when your child is spending the night at his or her friend's house? Think again! Before you permit your child to sleep over with a friend, talk to the child's parents. Depending on what you learn, your conversation can either uncover serious fire dangers or give you peace of mind during your child's sleepover.

Eight out of 10 fire deaths take place in the home, with the majority of home fire deaths occurring late at night. If you do not know for certain that the friend's home is equipped with working smoke alarms, and that the sleepover will be supervised by an adult, **do not take the risk**; reverse the invitation and have the sleepover at your own home.

The City of Newton Fire Department recommends teaching children about the importance of fire escape planning in a positive, non-threatening style. Ideally, your child is already well versed in home fire escape planning and drills in your own home. Before you permit a sleepover at a friend's, discuss the importance of knowing how to escape from a fire wherever you are, including their friends' homes. Parents need to empower children to ask friends and their friends' parents about fire safety in their home, and to report to you anything that makes them feel unsafe.

When it is your turn to have other children stay overnight in your home, make sure they know what your home's fire escape plan is. Consider making an **Exit Drill In The Home (EDITH)** exercise a part of the sleepover activities. Guests may need to have alternative exits pointed out to them as well as the safe meeting place your family uses. What better show of hospitality is there than concern for your guests safety?

Sleepover Checklist

Before you say “yes”

- How well do you know the home?
- Is the home clean?
- Does it appear to be structurally sound?
- Is the home in a safe area?
- If the home has security bars on the doors and windows, do you know for certain that the bars have quick release devices inside, so your child could get out in an emergency?
- Is your child comfortable in the home and with all the occupants?
- Are you comfortable leaving your child in the home overnight?

How well do you know the parent(s)?

- Are they mature, responsible, and conscientious?
- Will they supervise the children throughout the stay?
- Will they remain sober and attentive?
- Are they cautious with smoking materials, matches, lighters, and candles?

Ask the parent(s)

- Are there working smoke alarms on every level throughout the home?
- Do they have a well-rehearsed fire escape plan that includes two ways out and a meeting place outside?
- Where will your child be sleeping? Is there a smoke alarm in or near the room? Are there two escape routes from the room?
- Will the parents walk through their escape plan with your child?
- Do the parents prohibit candle use in the bedroom(s) by children?

Tell the parent(s)...

- About your home escape plan and the fire protection equipment you have in your home.
- That you will walk their child through your plan when invited to stay overnight in your home.

Does your child...

- Recognize and awaken to the sound of the smoke alarm? **Important:** If not, tell the sleepover parent(s) that your child does not waken to the smoke alarm and that someone will have to wake them in an emergency.
- Know what to do when the smoke alarm sounds?
- Know that he or she cannot hide from fire and that the top priority is to get out and stay out until firefighters say it is safe to go back inside?
- Know the fire department emergency number?
- Feel empowered to ask about the friends' escape plan?
- Feel empowered to tell you if there is a dangerous practice or situation at the friends' home?

For more information you can contact The City of Newton Fire Department at 828-695-4314.