

26 People Die in Fires

"Twenty-six people have died in dwelling fires in Alaska this year. Most of these deaths could have been avoided if the families involved had mapped out some sort of emergency plan for getting out of their house or cabin," State Fire Marshal Ron Hendrie said recently in asking Alaskans to observe operation "Edith" with their local fire departments during the period of Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 6 to Oct. 12.

"'Edith' stands for Exit Drills in the Home," said Hendrie. "It only takes a few minutes to seek out and practice how to get out of a dwelling once a fire starts. This applies to a cabin as well as a house.

"Cabins often have stoves near the only door, consequently a window which can easily be opened for escape is important," Hendrie added. "An escape window has to be large and low enough to get through and should not be sealed or obstructed by screens or storm windows which are not easily opened."

Other tips suggested by the fire marshal are: Figure out at least two routes to the outside from every room in the house, especially bedrooms; know how to summon the fire department from an alarm box, or a telephone booth or phone at a neighbor's home; and pick out an assembly point well away from the house where all members of the household will meet for "roll call."

The latter tip is extremely important. Many lives are lost when an individual goes back into a residence thinking to save someone when that person is already safe.

"Dwelling fires kill 125 people a week in the United States," Hendrie said. "Help keep your family from becoming victims, by planning an escape route now."