

## **JANUARY: Week 4 – Manufactured Home Safety**

**Overview:** Manufactured homes are transportable structures that are fixed to a chassis and specifically designed to be moved to a residential site. They are different from modular or prefabricated homes, which are factory-built and then transported sections to be installed at a permanent location but are not fixed to a chassis. State law does not define prefabricated homes.

The federal government regulates the construction of manufactured housing. Since 1976, manufactured homes have been required to comply with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) manufactured housing construction and safety standards, which cover a wide range of safety requirements, including fire safety. Homes manufactured after 1976 bear a label certifying compliance with these standards.

The HUD standard has been enhanced over the years, and the HUD "Final Rule" for smoke alarms in manufactured homes is largely based upon NFPA 501. Today, newly constructed manufactured houses are required to contain, among other provisions:

- Factory-installed hard wired or 10-year battery source, interconnected smoke alarms with battery back-up (including alarms inside or immediately adjacent to all rooms designated as sleeping areas, top of the stairs, and on the basement ceiling near the stairs); and
- Provisions for special devices for hearing and visually impaired persons.

NFPA's national fire data indicate that manufactured homes built to HUD standards (post-1976 construction) have a much lower risk of death and a significantly reduced risk of injury if fire occurs compared to pre-standard manufactured homes. However, despite the federal requirements for factory-installed smoke alarms, 38% of 1999 fires in post-HUD standard manufactured homes were reported as having no smoke alarms present. Since the homes are required to be sold with installed or readily installable smoke alarms, this suggests that detection devices are being removed by occupants.



While manufactured homes are no more prone to fire than homes built on site, any home fire can be severe. All residential homes can be better protected utilizing built-in fire protection systems such as fire sprinklers. These not only save lives, but property as well.

A fire in a manufactured home located in a rural area has a greater chance of becoming a “total loss fire” because of the increased amount of time needed for firefighters to reach the home. Lack of working smoke alarms is also a factor often noted in fatal manufactured home fires.

If planning to buy or rent a manufactured home, make sure you keep fire safety in mind. By following a few tips and knowing the facts and safety requirements for manufactured homes, you can help keep your family safe.

**Resources:** The following resources are available:

- Fire safety in manufactured homes
  - <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/ManufacturedHomesSafetyTips.ashx?la=en>
- SFMO information on manufactured housing and modular buildings
  - <https://www.tn.gov/commerce/fire/sections-programs/fire-manufactured-housing.html>

**Media Tools:** Use the following pre-written media releases and social media posts in your efforts to promote manufactured home safety:

- **Twitter**
  - Buying a manufactured home? Make sure it has working smoke alarms! @TNCommerceInsur #FireSafeTN
  - 2 steps to having a safe manufactured home: 1: working smoke alarms, 2: have an escape plan! @TNCommerceInsur #FireSafeTN
  - If using space heaters in a manufactured home, make sure they are 3 feet away from anything that can burn! @TNCommerceInsur #FireSafeTN
- **Facebook**
  - When buying a manufactured home, make sure you are buying a HUD-certified home. This means the home was built after 1976 and bears the HUD label certifying compliance with safety standards. Find out more here: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/ManufacturedHomesSafetyTips.ashx?la=en>
  - Always make sure your manufactured home has working smoke alarms in every sleeping area. For more info, and to request a free smoke alarm, go to [www.tn.gov/fire](http://www.tn.gov/fire)
  - Plan your escape! Know ahead of time how you will get out if you have a fire in your manufactured home. Develop an escape plan and have an alternate exit out of every room. Find out more here: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/ManufacturedHomesSafetyTips.ashx?la=en>

**Educator Tip:** Encourage your residents to follow these safety tips when considering a manufactured home:

- Choose a manufactured home built after June 15, 1976, that has the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) label certifying that the home meets the minimum safety standards.
- Keep gasoline, charcoal lighter, and other flammable liquids locked in an outdoor shed. Never store items under your manufactured home. Store firewood away from the home.
- Install skirting material to keep leaves and other debris and combustible items from blowing under your manufactured home where it could easily catch fire and spread into the home.

- Be sure your manufactured home has enough smoke alarms. If your home does not have smoke alarms in or near every sleeping room and in or near the family/living area(s), immediately install new alarms and fresh batteries to protect these rooms. For the best protection, interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- Have a home fire escape plan that includes two ways out of every room and an outside meeting place. Make sure all ways out of the home are cleared of clutter and easy to use. Practice your fire escape plan at least twice a year.
- If smoke alarms sound when cooking, consider moving the alarm further from the kitchen area or install a photoelectric type alarm, which is less sensitive to cooking.
- Consider having a licensed electrician inspect the electrical system in your manufactured home to be sure it is safe and meets applicable National Electrical Code® requirements.
- Never add too many plugs to outlets, extension cords or electrical circuits. If the circuit breaker trips or fuses blow, call a licensed electrician to check your system.
- Have smokers smoke outside the home. Provide large, non-tip ashtrays and empty them frequently. Douse butts with water before throwing them away.
- Do not smoke in bed or in a chair in which you are prone to falling asleep.
- Keep space heaters and candles at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn. Turn off portable space heaters and blow out candles before falling asleep or when leaving a room.
- When considering a new manufactured home, ask if residential sprinklers are available as an option.

For additional information on manufactured homes, contact the Tennessee Housing Association at 615-256-4733.

**NFPA/SFMO Messaging:**

See the following resource: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/ManufacturedHomesSafetyTips.ashx?la=en>