

SafetyToolboxTalks

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Smoke Alarm Response Time

Homeowner Jim Plahn describes when there was a fire at his house.

"My 13-year-old came running in from the kitchen and said, 'Dad, the house is on fire!' [It took us] less than 30 seconds to run down the hall way and grab the baby, [but] another minute or so she wouldn't have lived."

When the Plahns turned their house into a home by filling it with personal items, they had no idea the things they loved could help send their hopes dreams and lives up in smoke and flames.

Thirty or forty years ago, furniture and housing excessories were made of mostly wood cotton and fibers.

"Today, many of those materials are replaced by synthetic materials and what we know about synthetic materials is that they can burn hotter and faster", explained John Drengenberg of Underwriter Laboratories.

The aftermath of the fire at the Plahn home mimicks the results of a study by Underwriters Laboratories, showing the difference in how synthetic materials burn as opposed to natural materials.

"The one with the natural materials burned a lot slower which would ultimately give you a bit more time to evacuate," said Drengenberg.

Experts say twenty to thirty years ago when your smoke alarm went off, you had about seventeen minutes to get out before the smoke and flames either hurt or killed you.

"Today that seventeen minutes has been reduced to three or four minutes, which means that when the smoke alarm sounds in your home or apartment, the first thing you have to do is get out," said Drengenberg.