

Why Stairs Save Lives

Understanding Stairwell Safety & Elevator Risks in Emergencies



Stairwells: Your Safe Exit Route

- Stairwells are fire-rated enclosures designed to protect you from smoke and flames during an emergency.
- They are the only FDNY approved way to exit a high-rise building during a fire.
- Always stay to the right side of the stairwell to allow FDNY or first responders room to ascend quickly with equipment.

Why Elevators Should NEVER Be Used in a Fire

- Elevators may recall automatically to the lobby when the fire alarm activates, you'll be left waiting with no way to escape if the fire or smoke condition worsens.
- They may stop on the fire floor, trap you inside, or expose you to smoke.
- Elevators are reserved for FDNY and emergency use only. Taking one during a fire can delay their response and endanger lives.

The Role of Fire Doors

- Stairwell fire doors are built to self-close to contain smoke and flames.
- Do not wedge them open, this can allow smoke to spread and compromise the stairwells.
- Keeping fire doors unobstructed is essential to maintain safe evacuation routes.

Evacuation Reminders

- Listen for announcements over the PA system.
- Follow your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) team (Floor Wardens, Searchers, etc.).
- Use the stairs and never use elevators unless directed by emergency personnel.
- **Individuals with disabilities** should follow the building's approved plan, which may include waiting in a safe area or using a designated elevator under FDNY direction. Talk to your Fire Life Safety Director to confirm what applies to your specific location.

