



Security bars



The metal bars that people put on their windows and doors for security can trap them inside during a fire.

Oklahoma City, OK: Six people, including three teenagers and an 11-year-old child, were killed September 26, 2004, when fire swept through their home. It was reported that the victims were trapped by burglar bars on the windows.

Homestead, FL: Four children and their stepfather were killed on September 23, 2004, by a fast-spreading house fire. The windows of their home were still boarded up after recent hurricane

warnings. Plywood had been wedged between all the windows and the home's burglar bars.

Facts & figures

- Most of the fires involving security bars occur in low-income neighborhoods where people are already at higher risk for both crime and fires.
- California has passed laws requiring that security bars used on escape windows be releasable and that all security bars be labeled with safety information. Mississippi and Texas have laws with varying requirements.
- Underwriters Laboratories has set standards for window-bar releasing systems.

Safety tips

- Know two ways out of every room.
- Use quick release devices inside all barred doors and windows. Quick-release devices for security bars enable you to push the bars open from the inside, but they don't affect the security provided outside. These quick-release devices can involve pulling a lever, pushing a button, stepping on a pedal or kicking in a lever on the floor. Make sure everyone in the household knows how to operate the release devices.
- [Have working smoke alarms and test them monthly.](#)
- While practicing your [home fire escape plan](#), make sure that everyone in the household can operate the quick release mechanisms. If young children, older adults, or people with disabilities need extra help with the devices, designate a member of the household to help them, and decide on backups in case the designated person isn't home.

Updated 9/04