



Stay-alive strategy: Think on your feet.

■ One night, Kristin, 28, was in her apartment reading when she looked up and saw that her windows were engulfed in flames. "At first, I was so shocked that I felt paralyzed," she remembers. She frantically ran from her apartment to the nearest stairwell, but the door was too hot to open. The door at the second stairwell felt cooler but opened up to suffocatingly thick black smoke. "I was absolutely terrified," says Kristin. "How the hell am I going to live through this? I asked myself over and over." Luckily, she remembered that there was another, rarely used staircase down the hall, and she was able to get out.

Knowing *all* the possible escape routes in advance saved Kristin's life. Here's how to prepare for—and pull through—all kinds of potentially lethal predicaments.

you're trapped in a fire

- Always check a closed door for heat; if it's hot, do not open it, warns Margie Coloian of the National Fire Protection Association. Stuff clothes under the door to keep smoke out, and call 911.
- Being surrounded by a cloud of smoke is blinding. Practice an escape route with your eyes closed (on your hands and knees, since heat and smoke rise) so you'll be able to *feel* your way out in a fire.

- If you are caught in a fire at home or in a hotel, put a wet towel over your mouth and then *crawl* through the smoke to the closest exit.

- Invest in dry-chemical, ABC-rated fire extinguishers. Keep one on each floor and one near an exit.

- *Never* go back into a burning building.

your vehicle careens into water

- Keep a Life Hammer stashed in your glove box, advises Curt Rich, author of *Drive to Survive!* This save-your-butt tool (available for about \$21 at www.pentagondefense.com) has a hook blade to cut your seat belt and a spiked hammer to bust through the side window (windshields are shatterproof).

- If you can't break a window, let the car sink. Once it's fully flooded, the pressure will stabilize so you can open the door.

you're stranded in your car

- Upgrade your cell phone to one that connects to digital and analog services so you're more likely to get a signal *anywhere*.
- Keep a bottle of water in your car. The H₂O will keep you hydrated, and it can cool an overheated engine.

Survival Tips That Could Save Your Life

By now, you know a crisis can strike anyone at any time. Here's what you need to know to keep your cool and escape an emergency situation.

By Kara Higgins

your car is being tailed

- If you suspect that you're being followed, make three right turns. If the stranger is still on your trail, call 911, drive to a well-lit public place, and honk your horn.
- *Never* drive home—the last thing you want is for him to know where you live.
- If you're rear-ended at a stoplight, stay in the car, lock the doors, and call the cops. This is a common carjacking ploy.

you're in danger of being assaulted

- If you're ever attacked, crime-prevention expert Chris McGoey recommends yelling words like "fire!" or "help!" rather than just screaming.
- When approaching your car in a vacant lot, check under your vehicle and inside behind the seats. Have your keys in hand: They can be used to poke an assailant in the eye or throat.
- Pepper spray can stave off an attacker...if you know how to use it. Check to see if your local police department, community college, or rape crisis center offers lessons. ■

Duh—you already have these, right?

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| ■ Flashlight | ■ First-aid kit |
| ■ Matches | ■ Spare tire, jack, and flares in trunk |
| ■ Candles | |
| ■ Batteries | |