

# Are you prepared for an emergency?

HAVE you been caught during a fire emergency? I have often visualised what I would do in such a situation.

I tried to give attention to TV programmes showing fire and rescue personnel giving demonstrations on how to use fire extinguishers or to escape from a blazing building.

To be honest, I haven't got a clue as to how I would react, although I hope I could follow what I was taught.

I remember firemen telling me and friends in school that it helps to have a wet cloth (preferably blanket) protecting our body from the heat and fire as we attempt to escape.

If my memory serves me right, it is advisable to crawl to find our way out through the rising smoke, so that we can reduce the hazardous effect it would have.

I read about how some people were not so cooperative during emergency situations and even fire exercises.



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Whether it is our laid-back nature, meaning we simply couldn't care until danger comes right at our face, such attitude has to change if we really want to save lives, including our own.

We must always be ready for what could happen anytime, and help the fire engines and ambulances get to their destination fast.

Try not to park on narrow roads or back alleys as these could be the nearest to the scene, and our vehicle could cause obstruction to the fire engines.

We also know that it is against the law to park near fire hydrants or be caught inside the yellow boxes at traffic light junctions.

Once, a driver behind me honked when I didn't move into the yellow box while we waited for the light to change. I'm sorry, but I wouldn't want to stand in the way, especially when in front of a fire station, in case a fire breaks out somewhere.

I have also seen motorists trailing the ambulance in a traffic jam, probably thinking that they too would make it through the jam more easily. Don't they realise that one gives way only to emergency vehicles, and not to tailgating opportunists?

What I understand from Section 18 of the Fire Services Act 1988 is that firemen can exercise their power to take measures necessary to protect life and property, including removing obstructions and closing streets at the scene of a fire.

The same goes with fire drills. Just because it is an exercise, that doesn't make it less urgent that a real situation. This is the time when we get to familiarise with escape routes and to ask questions to firemen regarding the dos and don'ts during emergencies.

When you are in real fire situation, you will not have the luxury to choose whether to take your own sweet time to escape, or think hard over what to do first, or bring anything with you.

The only option is to just save yourself.