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WHERE THERE'S SMOKE — STAY LOW AND KEEP COOL!

When you check into a large hotel, as you may during GCSAA's 53rd International Turfgrass Conference and Show in New Orleans Jan. 31-Feb. 5, one small precaution may save your life. When you enter your room, take a moment to glance down the hallway and note the location of the stairwells. It will only take a second and you may not get another chance.

Fires in large hotels have become frightening familiar news stories lately, especially with two disastrous fires in Las Vegas hotels in a relatively short time. Unfortunately, most people think disasters of that type are something that only happens to other people. With more than 5,000 hotel fires in a year, the odds may catch up with you.

In a hotel fire, the flames are not the killers. Smoke, usually coupled with panic, is. That's why you should memorize the location of the stairwells as well as the layout of the room. You may not be able to see them very well later.

If you do smell smoke in the middle of the night, don't be in a hurry to flee. Call the hotel desk and report it to the fire department. They may have everything under control and if they don't at least someone will know where you are.

If you do leave your room, stay low and stay calm. Crawl to the stairwell and make your way down, keeping a firm grip on the handrail. Not everyone may be as calm as you, and you could be trampled. Don't try to take the elevator down and unless you're on the lower three floors, don't try to jump.

If you run into a dense area of smoke be sure to prop the door open so you won't be locked out.

Many people have remained unharmed in their rooms while others died trying to escape. It's a judgment call, but if you decide to stay in your room, several precautions can increase your chances of survival.

First, turn on the bathroom vent. Fill the tub with water for firefighting purposes. Stuff wet towels under the door. If the door and walls are hot, keep throwing water on them. Keep everything wet, and don't worry about the mess.

If your room has a window or sliding door, open it, but keep an eye on it. There may be more smoke outside than inside. If there is fire outside the window, get rid of the draperies and anything nearby that might be combustible. Keep pouring water around the window.

If you swing a wet towel around the room, it will help clear the smoke. Another wet towel tied around your nose and mouth will filter the air you breathe.

SMILE

"It happens in a flash, but the memory of it lasts forever, it cannot be begged, borrowed or stolen, but it is of no earthly good to anyone until it is given away. So if in your hurry you meet someone who is too weary to smile, leave one of yours, for no one needs a smile quite as much as he who has none to give!"

"It takes only 17 muscles to smile ... 43 muscles to frown. Conserve energy."