



Fire Safety for Older Adults and Their Caregivers



People over the age of 65 face the greatest risk of dying in a fire – more than 2 ½ times that of the general population. The U.S. Fire Administration wants older adults, their caregivers and all Americans to know that there are special precautions you can take to protect yourself and your home from fire.

Install and Maintain Smoke Alarms

The chance of surviving a home fire almost doubles with the initial warning from a smoke alarm.

- Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and inside and outside sleeping areas.
- Test them monthly and replace alkaline batteries at least once a year.
- Caregivers are encouraged to check the smoke alarms of those who are unable to do it themselves.

Plan Your Escape

Developing a fire escape plan around one's capabilities is a key element to fire safety!

- Have at least two exits from every room.
- If you use a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to be sure that you can go through the doorways.
- Unless instructed by the fire department, never use an elevator during a fire.
- If you live in a multi-story home, arrange to sleep on the ground floor near an exit.
- Speak to your family members, building manager or neighbors about your fire escape plan and practice it with them.

Be Safe Around Medical Oxygen

When using medical oxygen, the amount of oxygen in the air can increase. This means there is a higher risk of both fires and burns because it is easier for a fire to start and spread.

- Never smoke in a home where medical oxygen is used.
- Never use a candle, match, lighter or other open flame.
- Never use a fireplace, stove or other equipment fueled by gas, kerosene, wood or coal.
- Keep oil, grease and similar petroleum-based products away from oxygen valves. They can cause a spontaneous explosion.

Be Fire-Safe Around the Home

Careless smoking is a leading cause of home fire deaths among older adults.

- If you must smoke, never smoke in bed.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling or broiling food. Use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
- Don't overload electrical outlets or extension cords.
- Properly maintain chimneys and keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet away from space heaters.
- Take special precaution if you are on medication that makes you drowsy.

**Remember, the prevention of fires is up to all of us ...
Fire is Everyone's Fight™.**