



Fire Safety Lasts a Lifetime

A Fire Safety Factsheet for Older Adults and their Caregivers

People over the age of 65 face the greatest risk of dying in a fire. Last year, more than 1,200 Americans over the age of 65 died in home fires and 3,000 were injured in fire-related incidences.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA), a directorate of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 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.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

Why are Older Adults at Risk?

- Decreased mobility, health, sight, and hearing may limit a person's ability to take the quick action necessary to escape during a fire emergency.
- Depending on physical limitations, many of the actions an individual can take to protect themselves from the dangers of fire may require help from a caregiver, neighbor, or outside source.

INSTALL AND MAINTAIN SMOKE ALARMS

- Make sure smoke alarms are installed on each level of your home and outside all sleeping areas.
- Test them monthly and replace the batteries at least once a year.
- Caregivers are encouraged to check the smoke alarms of those who are unable to do it themselves. The chances of surviving a home fire almost doubles with the initial warning from a smoke alarm.

PLAN YOUR ESCAPE

Planning fire escape plans around one's capabilities is a key element to fire safety!

- Know at least two exits from every room.
- If you use a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to be sure they can go through the doorways.

- Make any necessary accommodations, such as providing exit ramps and widening doorways to facilitate an emergency escape.
- Unless instructed by the fire department, never use an elevator during a fire.

DON'T ISOLATE YOURSELF

- Speak to your family members, building manager, or neighbors about your fire safety plan and practice it with them.
- Contact your local fire department's non-emergency line and explain your special needs.
- The fire department will probably suggest escape plan ideas and may perform a home fire safety inspection and offer suggestions about smoke alarm placement and maintenance.
- Ask emergency providers to keep your special needs information on file.

LIVE NEAR AN EXIT

Although you have the legal right to live where you choose, you'll be safest on the ground floor if you live in an apartment building.

- If you live in a multi-story home, arrange to sleep on the ground floor, and near an exit.

BE FIRE-SAFE AROUND THE HOME

The leading cause of residential fire deaths among older adults is careless smoking.

- If you must smoke, never smoke in bed or near an oxygen source, gas stove, or other flammable object.
- When cooking, never approach an open flame while wearing loose clothing and don't leave cooking unattended. Use a timer to remind you of food in the oven.
- Don't overload electrical outlets or extension cords.
- Never use the oven to heat your home. Properly maintain chimneys and space heaters.
- Take special precaution if you are on medication that makes you drowsy.

KNOW YOUR ABILITIES

When it comes to fire...don't be scared, be prepared. *Fire Stops With You!*

For More Information Contact:
The United States Fire Administration
Office of Fire Management Programs
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

