

Fire Safety Checklist for Older Adults



Older adults (age 65 and older) are twice as likely to die in fires as any other age group. The death rate for those 85 and over is four times the national average. Older people are also at higher risk of injury from fires. The following tips can help protect you and those you care about from fires and burns.

✓ **Install and Maintain Smoke Alarms.** Install working smoke alarms on every level of your home, especially inside and outside of sleeping areas. Test and dust each alarm monthly, change the batteries at least once a year, and replace the entire smoke alarm unit every 8-10 years. Interconnected smoke alarms are best because if one sounds, they all sound.

✓ **Use Smoking Materials Safely.** Never smoke in bed, while drowsy, or while under the influence of medication or alcohol. Use large, deep ashtrays for smoking debris, and let the contents cool before you dispose of them. Never smoke while using oxygen or anywhere near a medical oxygen source, even if it is turned off.

✓ **Pay Attention to Your Cooking.** Keep pot handles turned inward, and keep cooking surfaces and surrounding areas free from clutter and grease build-up. Use pot holders and oven mitts. Never lean over a hot burner and avoid wearing loose clothing with flowing sleeves while cooking. Never leave food that is cooking on the stove unattended.

✓ **Heat Your Home Safely.** Have a professional service all heating equipment annually. Keep combustibles and anything that can burn or melt away from all heaters, furnaces, fireplaces, and water heaters. Never use a range or oven to heat your home.

✓ **Practice Electrical Safety.** Have a professional electrician inspect your home's electrical wiring system at least every 10 years, and make recommended repairs. Never overload the electrical system. Plug each appliance directly into its own outlet and avoid using extension cords. Have an electrician install ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in rooms where water may be present. Install and maintain electrical appliances according to the manufacturers' instructions.

✓ **Keep Matches and Lighters Away from Children.** Store matches and lighters in a locked drawer or a high cabinet away from the reach of grandchildren or other youngsters. Make sure lighters are child-resistant.

Know What to Do in Case of Fire.

Practice two ways out of every room in your home. Get out as soon as you discover a fire; do not try to fight the fire or gather possessions. Once out of the house, stay out; do not attempt to enter a burning home to gather possessions left behind. Immediately dial 9-1-1 or your local emergency number for help, preferably from a neighbor's phone.

Planning what to do in case of fire can make the difference between life and death. You should practice two ways out of every room in your home. If you use a wheelchair or walker, or otherwise might have a problem escaping from a fire, discuss your escape plans ahead of time with your fire department, your family, the building manager, and neighbors. Let them know about your special circumstances and ask them to help plan the best escape routes for you.

Source: <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-221.pdf>

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