



# Fire Prevention Safety Tips For Older Adults



June is National Safety Awareness Month, and with that in mind, here are some important fire prevention safety tips with particular emphasis on the senior adult population.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), by the time you reach 65 years of age, you are twice as likely to sustain death or injury by fire compared to the general population. This increases to three times as likely by 75 years of age and 4 times as likely by 85 years of age.

- **If you must smoke, smoke outside.** Cigarette or cigar butts should be wet before discarding them or buried in sand. Never smoke in bed or on the couch when you might fall asleep and never smoke if oxygen is used in the home.
- **Space heaters should be given plenty of space.** Place heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn and shut them off or unplug them before you leave home or go to bed. Always plug directly into a wall outlet and not into an extension cord or power strip.
- **Remain in the kitchen when cooking food on the stove.** Turn off the burner if you need to leave the room, use a timer as a reminder that something is cooking. If a pan catches fire, put a lid on it and turn off the burner. Use oven mitts to handle hot pots and pans and, if possible, use lightweight pans that are easier to handle. Don't cook over a stove with loose sleeves and make sure that you have a working fire extinguisher near by.
- **If your clothing catches fire, Stop, Drop and Roll.** Stop what you are doing, drop gently to the ground, covering your face with your hands, and roll back and forth to put out the fire. Get medical help immediately.
- **Make sure your smoke alarms are in good working order.** Smoke alarms save lives yet, roughly two-thirds of home fire deaths occur in homes without working alarms. Most fatal fires occur when people are sleeping so it's important to have alarms that are close enough and loud enough to wake you. This can be a problem for people who are hard of hearing. For those in this category, consider installing a smoke alarm that uses a strobe light and/or bed shaker. Smoke alarms should be installed on each level of a home, inside each bedroom and outside each sleeping area. Carbon monoxide detectors should be installed on each level of a home and outside each sleeping area. Ideally, have a system that is hardwired so that all of the alarms are interconnected so that when one sounds they all sound. Replace all alarms that are 10 years old or older and make sure to test monthly by pushing the test button. This may require the assistance of a family member or caregiver.
- **Have a plan to escape from fire and smoke.** Plan and practice two ways out of every room and your home. If you can't escape alone, make sure to designate someone to assist you. Make sure that you can open all of the doors and windows in your home from inside and that they are not sealed shut with paint or nails.
- **Know your local emergency number whether it's 911 or the fire department and call after you have escaped.** Make sure to have a land line or cell phone near your bed as well as the local emergency number in the event that you can't escape and need to call for help. A flashlight and whistle near your bed are useful tools to signal for help and keeping your glasses and mobility devices within reach is important too.
- **Consider subscribing to a wearable emergency alert system.** At the push of a button, the service will send emergency responders.