

The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Fire Safety

Smoke Alarms—Your First Defense

The elderly are at greater risk of dying in a fire. Poor vision, limited mobility, hearing loss, a reduced sense of smell, medication side effects (drowsiness) and dementia all contribute to the danger of fire for seniors. Caregivers can prevent tragedies by *reducing the chance* of the person in their care being killed or injured by a fire.

Smoke inhalation is the primary cause of fatality when it comes to fire-related deaths. In the majority of cases, the victims are asleep when the smoke enters their lungs.

Smoke alarms are devices that are able to *detect* smoke or fire then sound an audible alarm. They are very useful in detecting a fire in its early stages, allowing you adequate warning to evacuate before inhaling any harmful gases. For the best protection, install both ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms (some models provide dual coverage). **Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home or apartment building.**

- If you cannot install alarms yourself, ask for help. Many local fire companies will install free detectors for you.
- At a minimum, have an alarm immediately outside your sleeping area, either on the ceiling or high on the wall.



- Never disable alarms by removing batteries or disconnecting wires. If the detector goes off from cooking fumes or bathroom steam, it may be in a poor location and need to be moved.
- Clean alarms periodically to keep them free from dust and test the batteries. They should be changed at least twice per year.

FAST FACTS

- Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home fires in half.
- When smoke alarms fail to operate, it is usually because batteries are missing, disconnected, or dead.

Source: Reproduced from NFPA's website, © 2015

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Have a Home Escape Plan

Because of physical limitations, people with disabilities have a decreased ability to *react* in a fire emergency and may need the help of a caregiver to practice proper fire safety precautions. Special fire warning devices are available, such as smoke alarms with a *vibrating pad* or *flashing light* for the deaf and hard of hearing. In case of fire, plan the escape around the person's *capabilities*.



- ✓ **Essential bedside items:** Eyeglasses, whistle and a phone. You need your glasses to see *how* to escape from fire and avoid injury. The whistle lets people know where you are so that you can be rescued and helps you warn others of fire. If you are trapped, the telephone will let you call for help. Remember, your first priority is to *get out of the building*. Don't stop to call the fire department until you are safely outside.
- ✓ **Plan your escape route:** Have primary and back-up routes mapped out for each room. Practice getting out. If you have practiced escape routes, your memory and instinct will help you move in the right direction and in the right way.
- ✓ **Check windows from which escape is planned:** Can you open the window or is it painted or nailed shut? Make sure your exits *allow* you to exit!
- ✓ **If you use a wheelchair or walker:** Map out escape routes that are wide enough for you to get through.
- ✓ **Discuss your escape plans** with your family, the building manager or neighbors. Everybody should know where to meet outside the building and what routes to take.
- ✓ **If you have impairments** that might make it difficult for you to escape from fire, let your local fire department and other emergency service providers know. Many departments issue special window stickers to mark the bedrooms of people with special needs.

Alzheimer's Fire Safety

If a person with dementia or Alzheimer's disease lives in the house, take additional fire safety precautions: Be sure to keep matches and cigarettes out of reach. Install a gas stove shut-off valve or a circuit breaker for an electric stove so the stove cannot be turned on without proper supervision.

Taking Care of Yourself—The Healing Power of Pets

Pets do not just make good friends for children, they are also make great companions for seniors. Owning a pet has been shown to help reduce stress and loneliness among the elderly, as well as improve their blood pressure levels, physical activity levels, and social interaction. Pets also stimulate mental activity and reduce anxiety over the future, As well as benefiting from having a loving companion, a pet can reducer focus on the physical discomforts related to aging. A trained dog can help people with disabilities do some activities of daily living. For more information, visit www.petpartners.org.



Get Your Annual Flu Shot

If you're over 65, getting an annual flu vaccine greatly reduces your chances of getting the flu or its dangerous complications.

Live Life Laughing!

If they try to rush me I say, "I've only got one other speed—and it's slower."



Inspiration

Never question the meaning of taking a few steps backwards. After all, dancing through life gracefully requires a full range of motion.

Don't Fall – Be Safe

Occupational therapy can help improve skills and capabilities, such as strength or balance and teach people how to modify activities so they can do them safely.

The Comfort of Home[®]

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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***SAFETY TIPS*—The Big Four Fire Starters**

- 1. Smoking.** Unsafe smoking habits are the lead cause of fire deaths among older Americans. Never leave smoking materials unattended. Never smoke in bed. Check all furniture and carpets for fallen cigarettes and ashes before leaving home or going to sleep. **Never allow smoking near an oxygen tank.**
- 2. Heating equipment.** Especially dangerous are kerosene heaters, woodstoves and electric space heaters. **Never use a cook stove to heat your home.**
- 3. Cooking** is the third leading cause of fire deaths. **Most kitchen fires occur when cooking food is left unattended. Never cook while wearing robes or other loose fitting garments that can contact hot surfaces.**
- 4. Faulty wiring.** Regularly inspect extension cords for exposed wires or loose plugs. **If you see or smell smoke or sparks coming from any electrical appliance or outlet, shut off the main breaker and call an electrician at once.**

Source: U.S. Fire Administration; Home Safety Council

NEXT ISSUE... ELDER ABUSE – FINANCIAL, PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL