

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

Be Safe from Fire

Every day in America, on average seven people die and many more are injured in home fires. Most of those injuries could be prevented with some safety steps. **Older adults are more than twice as likely to die in a home fire than other age groups.** People over the age of 80 die in fires at a rate *three times* higher than the rest of the population. 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.



The Home Fire Escape Plan

More than 50% of home fire deaths occur at night when most people are sleeping. People with disabilities may have physical limitations and a decreased ability to *react* in a fire emergency. Special fire warning devices are available, such as smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or flashing light for the deaf and hard of hearing. Draw a fire escape plan on paper and plan the escape around the person's capabilities.

- ✓ **Three 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 phone 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:** Know two ways out of every room—a primary and back-up routes mapped out for each room. Ensure escape routes are wide enough for a walker or wheelchair and remove items that may block your way out. *Practice getting out.* If you have practiced escape routes, your memory and instinct will help you move in the right direction.
- ✓ **Check windows from which escape is planned:** Can you open the window? Be sure exits allow you to exit!
- ✓ **Share your escape plans** with your family, the building manager or neighbors.
- ✓ **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.

Source: FEMA.gov; National Fire Protection Association

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The Big Four Fire Starters

- 1** **Smoking.** Smokers are seven times more likely than nonsmokers to be fire victims. Smoking materials are the *number one* cause of home fires that kill seniors. Practice safer smoking habits: Never leave smoking materials (cigarettes, cigars, pipes, lighters) unattended. Use wide-lipped “safety ashtrays.” Douse ashtrays with water and empty them into a metal container before going to bed. Make it a **RULE** to never smoke in bed, while lying down, or on upholstered furniture—especially when you are drowsy or taking medication that makes you sleepy. Check all furniture and carpets for fallen cigarettes and ashes before leaving home or going to sleep. Set your cigarette lighter on “low” to prevent burns. Keep all smoking materials out of bedrooms. Burning bedclothes can create a fire from which escape is impossible and toxic fumes from the smoke can kill. ***Never allow smoking near an oxygen tank.***
- 2** **Heating equipment.** Space heaters are responsible for two out of every three home-heating fires. Buy only UL approved heaters and use only the manufacturer’s recommended fuel for each heater. Use heaters with automatic shut-off features. Do *not* use electric space heaters in the bathroom or other wet areas. Give space heaters space. Place heaters at least three feet from any combustible material, such as bedding or furniture. Once a year, have chimneys, fireplaces, wood stoves and furnaces serviced. ***Never use a cook stove to heat your home.***
- 3** **Cooking** is the third leading cause of fire deaths. For the elderly, the kitchen can be a dangerous place. ***Most kitchen fires occur when cooking food is left unattended.*** If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, turn off the burner. If there’s something in the oven, check it every 15 minutes. Use a bell timer to remind you. If you leave the kitchen briefly, carry a spoon or potholder with you to remind you to return. If a fire starts in a pan, put a lid on it. ***Never throw water on a grease fire.*** Keep flammable liquids, like alcohol and cooking oils, and paper away from the stove. Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen (but not right next to the stove) and learn how to use it. Wear snug clothing without loose, dangling sleeves; don’t leave paper towels and plastic wrap near the stove; and remove flammable liquids from the kitchen. Never leave the stove unattended.
- 4** **Faulty wiring.** Many seniors live in older homes with wiring problems. Regularly inspect extension cords for exposed wires or loose plugs. Unplug them when not in use. If you need to plug in two or three appliances, lamps, etc., get a UL-approved unit that has built-in circuit breakers. ***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

Taking Care of Yourself — **Getting Perspective - Let Go of Added Stress**

Taking care of someone's needs can be so demanding that nearly every caregiver can feel stress. On top of caregiving chores, one added cause of stress is our own personalities. Our individual personalities can cause some of us to feel more stress in the same situation than others. Ask yourself if you possess any of the following traits. If you do, understand that they may be increasing your stress level, and go easy on yourself.

- Perfectionism and high expectations of oneself or others
- Difficulty saying no and difficulty delegating responsibility to others
- Too much self-sacrifice; seeing oneself as a "super" person and not accepting one's own limitations

Carbon Monoxide Detectors and Smoke Alarms

A leaky gas stove can give off dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Install a carbon monoxide detector and also check the smoke alarm batteries. They can save a life.

Inspiration

*We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone.
~Ronald Reagan*

Live Life Laughing!

She looks so satisfied because she just posted a selfie on Facebook.



Don't Fall – Be Safe

Arrange to have leaves, snow, and ice removed from stairs and walkways. Use salt or sand throughout the winter months. If you use a cane, replace the rubber tip before it is worn smooth. Medical supply stores carry an ice pick-like attachment that fits onto the end of the cane to help keep you from slipping when you walk.

*Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®*

Our Purpose

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

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SAFETY TIPS—Trim the Tree Safely

Christmas trees pose a serious danger if not properly cared for.

- ★ If needles are brown or break easily, the greenery isn't fresh and poses a greater fire risk. Dehydrated trees catch fire easily. Keep live trees in a sturdy stand with water at all times.
- ★ Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any flame or heat source. Place it near an outlet so that cords are not running where the senior can trip. Do not place the tree where it may block exits.
- ★ Inspect electrical lights and extension cords for wear and replace any cords that are beginning to fray or have broken sockets. String no more than three strands of lights together.



Source: Home Safety Council

NEXT ISSUE... ALZHEIMER'S - RESISTANCE TO CARE