

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Fire Safety / Cold Weather Safety

The number of cooking fires increases significantly during the Holidays so it is important for you to stay alert and be watchful while you are cooking. A range or stovetop is the leading cause of reported home fires and home fire injuries in the United States.

Choose the Right Equipment and Use It Properly. Cook only with equipment designed and intended for cooking, and heat your home only with equipment designed and intended for heating.

The Big Four Fire Starters

1. **Smoking.** Many seniors or their visitors still smoke. **Unsafe smoking habits lead the cause of fire deaths among older Americans.** Never leave smoking materials unattended. Use wide-lipped “safety ashtrays.” Douse ashtrays with water and empty them into a metal container before going to bed. Never smoke in bed or on upholstered furniture. 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.** Especially dangerous are kerosene heaters, woodstoves and electric space

heaters. Buy only UL approved heaters and use only the manufacturer’s recommended fuel for each heater. Do *not* use electric space heaters in the bathroom or other wet areas. Keep paper and fabric away from heat sources. Once a year, have chimneys, fireplaces, wood stoves and furnaces serviced. **Never use a cook stove to heat your home.**

3. **Cooking.** 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. To prevent spills due to overturned appliances containing hot food or liquids, use the back burner when possible, and/or turn pot handles away from the stove’s edge. Use oven mitts or potholders when moving hot food from ovens, microwave ovens, or stovetops. Keep a fire extinguisher



Article continues
on page 2

in the kitchen (but not right next to the stove) and learn how to use it. **Never cook while wearing robes or other loose fitting garments that can contact hot surfaces.**

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 circuit breaker and call an electrician at once.**

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.



Taking Care of Yourself—Christmas Tree Fire Safety

Choosing a healthy tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched is the first step for a safe Holiday. Reduce the risk of a Christmas tree fire in your home by taking these precautions:

- ✓ Keep the tree well-watered and check the water level in the stand daily.
- ✓ Keep the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source such as space heaters, candles, fireplaces, heat vents, or lights.
- ✓ Make sure that the tree does not block an exit.
- ✓ Only use decorative lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- ✓ Always turn off tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- ✓ Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry and keep it away from your home/garage. Of the ten days with the largest shares of Christmas tree fires, none were before Christmas. For more safety tips visit, The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)



Live Life Laughing!

Christmas is just like my job. I do all the work buying gifts and the fat guy in the suit gets all the credit.



Inspiration

Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.

— Dr. Seuss
(Theodor Seuss Geisel)

Memory Care - Holiday Safety

Extra precautions should be taken so that Holiday lights and decorations are fixed firmly and out of the way of those with Alzheimer's disease. Anything flammable should be monitored at all times.

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.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

*Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®
Caregiver Series*

available from...

CareTrust Publications LLC
PO Box 10283, Portland, OR 97296
800-565-1533
or www.comfortofhome.com

Comments and suggestions welcome.

©2019 CareTrust Publications LLC.
All rights reserved. Reproduction of any component of this publication is forbidden without a license from the publisher.

Some content in this publication is excerpted from *The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series*. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.

SAFETY TIPS—Avoiding Hypothermia

During winter, anyone who wanders outdoors is at risk of hypothermia, a condition when the body temperature falls to below 95° F. To prevent hypothermia—

- Keep the temperature at home at least 65° F to 70° F if the senior is ill. A frail, older adult in a 60-degree house can develop mild hypothermia overnight.
- Wear warm clothes, including wool leg warmers for the arms and legs for added warmth.
- Use warm blankets in bed.
- Wear a knit hat indoors and a warm hat outside to avoid losing heat.
- Eat a balanced diet and avoid dehydration by drinking enough fluids.
- Keep warm by moving and walking around the house and lifting and stretching the arms and legs.

NEXT ISSUE... ELDER ABUSE / DEALING WITH DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS IN ALZHEIMER'S