



# Fire Safety For Seniors

*Why Seniors Are at Risk and  
What to Do About It*





## Speak Up For Seniors

- Speak to your family members, building manager or neighbors about your fire safety plan and practice it with them.
- Contact your local fire department's non-emergency line and explain your special needs.
- The fire department will probably suggest escape plan ideas, perform a home fire safety inspection and offer suggestions about smoke alarm placement and maintenance.
- Ask emergency providers to keep your special needs information on file.
- Live near an exit. Although your parent has the legal right to live where they choose, they'll be safest on the ground floor if they live in an apartment building.
- If living in a multi-story home, arrange sleeping arrangements on the ground floor, and near an exit.

## Special Needs

If your elderly parent uses a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to be sure they can go through the doorways.

Make any necessary accommodations, such as providing exit ramps and widening doorways, to facilitate an emergency escape.

Unless instructed by the fire department, never use an elevator during a fire.

# About 80 Percent of all Fire Deaths Occur in the Home

People over the ages of 65 are at highest risk of dying in a fire. People age 65-75 are twice as likely as the general population; 75-85 are three times as likely; and 85+ are more than four times as likely to be killed in a house fire.

## Fire Life-Saving Tips

- Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home.
- Test smoke alarm batteries every month and change them at least once a year.
- Consider installing a 10-year lithium battery powered smoke alarm, which is sealed so it cannot be tampered with or opened.
- Develop and practice a home fire escape plan.

## Go Room to Room

**Kitchens** are a high danger zone for fire, so be extra cautious when cooking.

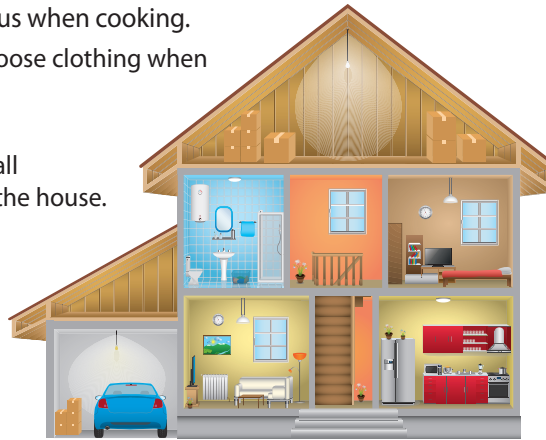
- Don't leave stoves unattended while cooking and avoid loose clothing when cooking.
- Never use the range or oven to heat the home.
- Double-check the kitchen to be sure the oven and all small appliances are turned off before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Don't overload electrical outlets.
- Always keep dish towels away from all appliances and electrical outlets.

**Bedrooms** are a common area of fire origin. Each year, fires claim the lives of 4,000 people and injure approximately 20,000 people. Nearly 600 lives are lost to fires that start in bedrooms. Many of these fires are caused by misuse or poor maintenance of electrical devices, such as overloading extension cords or using portable space heaters too close to combustibles. Many other bedroom fires are caused by children who play with matches and lighters, careless smoking among adults and arson.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the Sleep Products Safety Council (SPSC) would like you to know that there are simple steps you can take to prevent the loss of life and property resulting from bedroom fires.

Most electrical fires start in the bedroom. During winter months, fires are a special concern since people spend more time indoors and increase their use of lights, heat and appliances. Do not trap electrical cords against walls where heat can build up. Take extra care when using portable heaters. Keep bedding, clothes, curtains and other combustible items at least three feet away from space heaters. Only use lab-approved electric blankets and warmers. Check to make sure the cords are not frayed. Never smoke in bed. Replace mattresses made before the 1973 Federal Mattress Flammability Standard. Mattresses made since then must meet safety standards.

**Working smoke alarms** dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. Place at least one smoke alarm on each level of your home and in hallways outside bedrooms. Additionally remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family or a neighbor.



## Older Adults Are At Risk

Decreased mobility, health, sight and hearing may limit a person's ability to take the quick action necessary to escape during a fire emergency.

Depending on physical limitations, many protective actions may require help from a caregiver, neighbor, or outside source.

## Free In-Home Assessment from Visiting Angels

Your local Visiting Angels agency can provide you with peace of mind and perform a free in-home safety assessment at your convenience. The safety and security of seniors is our first concern at Visiting Angels, so call today.

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