



Smoke Alarms

Did you know that smoke alarms lose their ability to do their job over time? It's true. It is recommended that they be replaced every 10 years. Many seniors live in homes they established many years ago. Maybe it was the home in which they raised their children. Or perhaps it was a home bought as they retired from the workforce. Many of these homes have smoke alarms that are older than 10 years and should be replaced.

- Replace smoke alarms every 10 years. Often your local fire department can assist you with installing smoke alarms.
- Keep the batteries fresh. If you have a lithium battery smoke alarm, the battery is good for the life of the alarm. But if you have a regular battery smoke alarm, be sure to have the batteries changed at least once a year. Often your local fire department can assist you with changing the batteries.
- Make sure you have good coverage throughout the home with your smoke alarms. There should be one in the sleeping area, one in the main living area, one on every level of the home. One should also be located near, but not in, the kitchen.

Smoke alarms designed for those who are hard of hearing or deaf are available. These alarms often have a vibration and/or strobe light alert in addition to an audible alarm.



Preventing Kitchen Fires and Injuries

The kitchen is the one room in the home that is most likely to see a fire start. There are many causes to kitchen fires and unattended cooking is the leading cause of those fires. In fact, unattended cooking is the leading cause of fire in the United States. It is easy to get distracted when in the kitchen, but the results can be devastating. To older adults who are already at a greater risk of injury and death in a fire the results can be tragic.

Here are some things you can do to reduce your risk of a kitchen fire:

- Never leave cooking unattended. If you must leave the kitchen, either turn off the burner or take something that will remind you that you are cooking (a wooden spoon, a timer, etc.).
- Dress safely. Keep sleeves short or rolled up when cooking. Make sure that clothing isn't loose or otherwise likely to catch fire.
- If a pot or pan does catch fire while you are cooking COVER IT with a lid or baking sheet and turn off the burner. If the oven catches on fire, close the door and shut off the heat.
- Keep appliances like the cook top, the oven and the toaster clean and make sure the cooking area is free of clutter.
- Unplug appliances when not in use and make sure their cords are in good repair
- Do not use the oven to heat the home.



Fire Escape Plan

Knowing what to do if a fire should occur in your home is an important step in surviving a fire. Practicing what to do is even more important. When a fire strikes there is precious little time to react in a manner that can save a life and prevent injury. Knowing what to do ahead of time can make all the difference.

- Know more than one way to safely get out of the home. Everyone who lives in the home should know at least two ways out of the home.
- Have a set family meeting place. This is how you will know everyone made it safely out of the home in the event of a fire. It is important to stay outside and not go back in for any reason.
- When the smoke alarm sounds, take it seriously and react quickly. Better to react to a false alarm as though it were the real thing rather than not react and become trapped.
- Keep glasses, medications, telephone, flashlight and walking aids close to the bed at night
- If you or a loved one in the home has mobility limitations, be aware of those and make modifications to your escape plan accordingly. Your local fire department can often guide you in this process.
- Call 911 from outside the home. Use a cellular phone or a neighbor's phone.

If you find yourself unable to leave your home in the event of a fire:

- Put as much distance between you and the fire as possible.
- Make sure doors are shut between you and the fire.
- Let someone know you are trapped. Call 911 and tell them. Open your window and yell for help. Hang a sheet or something outside the window to draw attention to your situation and location.
- Remember to stay low under smoke and heat. Smoke is what kills people in fires.



Accessing 9-1-1

Over the last 35-40 years 911 has been introduced and become a vital part of the fire and life safety response system. But many older adults did not grow up with 911 and sometimes there is confusion over how to best access the services offered by 911.

- 911 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- 911 is ALWAYS a free call from any phone.
- 911 is for reporting fires, big and small. Actually, reporting a fire when it is small is much better than trying to deal with the fire on your own and then having to call 911 to report a large fire.
- 911 is for reporting sudden illness or injury that should have immediate attention. It does not have to be a life threatening illness or injury for you to call 911.
- 911 is for also for emergency service calls.

It is not “bothering” firefighters, police officers or emergency medical technicians when 911 is called to report a fire, injury or illness. They are on call 24 hours a day to provide emergency medical, emergency service and fire response to those who call.