

Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike,
Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



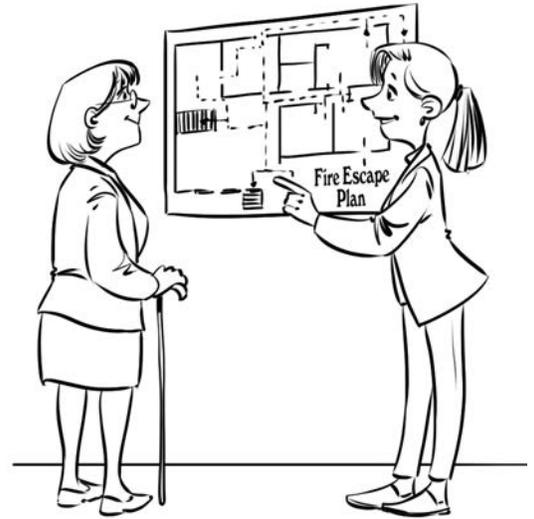
DECEMBER 2014

Be Safe from Fire

Every year in America, over 4,000 people die and more than 20,000 are injured in fires. Around 80 percent of those fires are in homes. Most of the 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. Caregivers can help prevent tragedies by reducing the chance of the person in their care being killed or injured by a fire.

The Home Fire Escape Plan

More than 50 percent of home fire deaths occur between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am 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, a 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 the fire escape plan. 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. Everybody should know where to meet outside the building and what routes everyone is taking.

✓ **If you have impairments** that might make it difficult for you to escape from a 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

4 Big 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

Many people use space heaters during cold weather months; however, space heaters are responsible for two out of every three home-heating fires. 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. When purchasing an electric space heater, look for 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, furniture, fabric and paper. Once a year, have chimneys, fireplaces, wood stoves and furnaces serviced. Never use a cook stove to heat your home.

3. Cooking.

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., buy 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

"You can disagree with an argument, but not with a personal experience."

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Blogging - A Great Pastime

In the world of social networking, the elderly have found a perfect pastime - blogging.

- It keeps retired people socially connected and helps avoid a lonesome and isolated lifestyle.
- It creates a new, extended social circle for seniors even after they leave the company of colleagues in the workplace.
- It keeps the elderly updated with new trends.
- Skype and e-mail help people with mobility issues keep up with family and friends.
- Blogging makes the thinking process active and helps mental focus.



Source: www.retirementhomes.com

Natural Gas Safety

If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak:

- Open windows to let in fresh air.
- Do not turn on or off any electrical appliances or light switches.
- Do not attempt to locate the leak.
- Do not use the house phone or cell phone in the house.
- Do not smoke or light matches.
- Leave the house and from a safe distance call 911.

Source: *New York City Fire Department*



Alzheimer's Association Support Programs

Understanding and Dealing with Alzheimer's Disease or Another Dementia

This program will provide an opportunity for families and caregivers to learn and ask questions about Alzheimer's disease and dementia, while receiving support from others in similar situations.

Program is free of charge. No registration required.

Jackson County: 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

January 15, 2015 - Making the Transition from Home to a Care Facility
(Jenkins Care Community in Wellston)

For more information about these programs and other similar programs available in or near your community, or for assistance with registering, please call Melissa Dever, LSW, from the Alzheimer's Association, at (740) 710-1821 or 1-800-272-3900.



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Safety Tips - *Candle Safety Tips*

Candles may be pretty to look at, but they are a cause of home fires — and home fire deaths. Remember, a candle is an open flame, which means that it can easily ignite anything that can burn.

- Blow out all candles when you leave the room or go to bed. Avoid the use of candles in the bedroom and other areas where people may fall asleep.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn.
- Think about using flameless candles in your home. They look and smell like real candles.

If you do burn candles, make sure that you...

- Use candle holders that are sturdy and won't tip over easily.
- Place candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface.
- Light candles carefully. Keep your hair and any loose clothing away from the flame.
- Don't burn a candle all the way down — put it out before it gets too close to the holder or container.
- Never use a candle if oxygen is used in the home.
- Have flashlights and battery-powered lighting ready to use during a power outage. Never use candles.

Source: National Fire Protection Association - www.nfpa.org

