

Be Fire Safe and Fire Smart

Everyone should have fire prevention and response plans in place, but this becomes especially important for older adults because of changes that come with aging or impaired health. According to the National Fire Protection Association, adults over 65 years old are twice as likely to die in a fire and those over 85 are four times more likely.

Prevent Fires

- **Safe Cooking:** Always watch stove top items and turn off burners if you must walk away – even for a minute. Turn handles of pots and pans toward the back to avoid accidentally knocking them over. Avoid loose-fitting and dangling clothing on your arms and chest while you cook. Keep flammable materials like towels, potholders, papers, etc., away from heating appliances. Use a timer to remind you if you are using the oven. If you don't feel safe cooking, contact your case manager or an area agency on aging, **1-866-243-5678** about receiving home delivered meals or other assistance with meal preparation.
- **Safe Electrical Equipment:** Unplug small appliances like toasters and can openers after each use. If an appliance appears to be malfunctioning, have it checked and repaired before using again. Be sure that electrical cords and any extension cords are in proper working condition. Be sure outlets are not overloaded.
- **Safe Heating:** Do not use your oven to heat your home. If you use electric space heaters, be sure the electrical cords are in good condition and the outlet can handle the load. Do not share an outlet used by a heater with any other device. Avoid using extension cords with heaters. Use only the correct fuel in kerosene heaters to avoid fire or explosion, and be sure to let the heater cool before refueling. Store and handle the fuel safely. Be sure fireplace flues are clear and always use a screen to deflect sparks. Keep combustible materials like blankets and clothing at least three feet away from any heat sources. If your utility services have been cut off, contact your utility company to make arrangements or contact your case manager or an area agency on aging for resources to assist you in resolving the matter.



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Prevent Fires (continued)

- **Safe Decorating:** The use of candles and other open flames requires direct and constant supervision. Keep flammable materials at least three feet away and extinguish flames before leaving a room. For electrical decorations, avoid extension cords and overloading outlets. Turn off and unplug electrical decorations overnight and when you will not be home.

Be Prepared

- **Install smoke detectors** on each level of your home and in all sleeping areas and test them monthly. Change the batteries every six months. For help obtaining and installing smoke detectors and batteries, contact your local fire department, your case manager or an area agency on aging.



- **Use only deep-seated ashtrays.** If you or others in your home must smoke, keep smoking materials away from combustible materials and wet them before disposing of them. Never smoke while lying down, when tired or when taking medications that cause drowsiness. Always turn off medical oxygen while someone in the house is smoking, then turn it back on when they've finished.

- **Develop and practice a fire evacuation plan.** Identify at least two ways to get out and review safety steps like checking closed doors for heat before opening, using your emergency alert device if you have one and crawling on the floor below the smoke. Get out fast and stay out!
- **If you require assistance getting out of the house,** close the door to your room, stay near a window and stay on the phone with rescuers. Alert your local fire department prior to a fire that you may be unable to evacuate without assistance in the event of a fire – this will help keep you and your rescuers safer.

**“An ounce
of prevention is
worth a pound
of cure.”**

**– Benjamin Franklin,
volunteer fire fighter**