

NEWTON FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

SAFETY TIPS FOR SENIORS

Americans over the age of 65 have a fire death rate nearly twice the national average. For those over 75, this jumps to three times the national average. Whether living independently or in a care facility, there are steps seniors can take to remain safe from a fire.

Be Kitchen Wise

Don't leave the kitchen while you are cooking. If you have to leave the kitchen to answer the doorbell or talk on the phone, set a timer or take a spoon to remind yourself that you are cooking.

Give Space Heaters Space

Keep at least three feet between portable heaters and anything that can burn, including furniture, papers, blankets, pets and you.

Avoid Smoking Indoors

If you must smoke indoors, use large ashtrays. Never smoke while drowsy or in bed. It is very dangerous to fall asleep with a lit cigarette, cigar or pipe in your hands.

Plan Your Escape

It is a good idea to keep a pair of slippers, eyeglasses and flashlight by your bed at night. If you hear your smoke alarm at night you will be prepared to get out of your home quickly. Once you hear the sound of your smoke alarm every second counts for your escape. Make a plan that includes two safe ways out of every room to help you get out and away from the fire. Remember that fire grows very quickly. There is no time to gather belongings and pets are usually able to get out on their own.

Elevators

Elevators should never be used in a fire emergency. Everyone must use the stairwells to leave the building. If you are unable to use stairs, you should stay in an area of refuge. An apartment is a good example of an area of refuge. It has a door to keep the smoke out, a phone from which to call 9-1-1 for help and windows to signal from.

Smoke Alarms

Approximately 75 percent of the 1,300 senior citizens who die nation-wide in fires each year do not have working smoke alarms in their homes. Smoke alarms are designed to wake you up if a fire starts in your home at night. It is dangerous to risk assuming the smell of smoke or the heat of the fire will wake you up. Just a few breaths of the smoke will endanger your life and by the time the heat wakes you up your means of escape may be gone.