

August 2017

Theme: Fire Safety For Seniors And Those With Disabilities

Week 1: Fire Safety For Older Adults

Week 2: Portable Oxygen And Smoking Dangers

Week 3: Portable Fire Extinguishers

Week 4: Fire Safety For Those With Disabilities

Events:

State Fire Marshal Annual Fire and Life Safety poster contest begins
89th Annual West Virginia State Firemen's Association Convention Aug. 23rd-26th

Educator Tips: Connect with other organizations in your community to help cross promote your posts and information. Call and coordinate with social media managers of organizations that represent the target audiences you'd like to reach. This will increase the number of people you're able to contact with your messages.

National Fire Service History:

- August 5, 1897 - Chicago Grain Elevator Explosion (6 FF Deaths)
- August 1, 1932 - NY Basement Explosion (8 FF's Killed)
- August 5, 1949 - MT Wildland Fire (13 FF's Killed)
- August 17, 1975 - PA Refinery Flashover Fire (8 FF deaths)
- August 2, 1978 - NY Roof Collapse (6 FF's Killed)
- August 29, 2005 - Hurricane Katrina (1,700+ deaths)

WV Fire Service History:

- August 8, 2014 - Motoaka downtown burns, causing an estimated \$4 million in damage, destroying four buildings that housed two businesses and several apartments. It started in a former hotel on Barger Street. At one point, emergency workers from 14 agencies were on scene battling the fire and redirecting traffic.



Fire Safety For Older Adults

Knowing what to do in the event of a fire is particularly important for older adults. At age 65, people are twice as likely to be killed or injured by fires compared to the population at large. And with our numbers growing every year - in the United States and Canada, adults age 65 and older make up about 12 percent of the population - it's essential to take the necessary steps to stay safe.

Safety tips

To increase fire safety for older adults, NFPA offers the following guidelines:

Keep it low

- If you don't live in an apartment building, consider sleeping in a room on the ground floor in order to make emergency escape easier. Make sure that smoke alarms are installed in every sleeping room and outside any sleeping areas. Have a telephone installed where you sleep in case of emergency. When looking for an apartment or high-rise home, look for one with an automatic sprinkler system. Sprinklers can extinguish a home fire in less time that it takes for the fire department to arrive.

Sound the alarm

- The majority of fatal fires occur when people are sleeping, and because smoke can put you into a deeper sleep rather than waking you, it's important to have a mechanical early warning of a fire to ensure that you wake up. If anyone in your household is deaf or if your own hearing is diminished, consider installing a smoke alarm that uses a flashing light or vibration to alert you to a fire emergency. View a list of product manufacturers.

Do the drill

- Conduct your own, or participate in, regular fire drills to make sure you know what to do in the event of a home fire. If you or someone you live with cannot escape alone, designate a member of the household to assist, and decide on backups in case the designee isn't home. Fire drills are also a good opportunity to make sure that everyone is able to hear and respond to smoke alarms.

Open up

- Make sure that you are able to open all doors and windows in your home. Locks and pins should open easily from inside. (Some apartment and high-rise buildings have windows designed not to open.) If you have security bars on doors or windows, they should have emergency release devices inside so that they can be opened easily. These devices won't compromise your safety, but they will enable you to open the window from inside in the event of a fire. Check to be sure that windows haven't been sealed shut with paint or nailed shut; if they have, arrange for someone to break the seals all around your home or remove the nails.

Stay connected

- Keep a telephone nearby, along with emergency phone numbers so that you can communicate with emergency personnel if you're trapped in your room by fire or smoke.

STOVETOP FIRESTOP FIRE SAFETY TIPS FOR SENIORS

IN THE KITCHEN

- Never leave the stove unattended when cooking.
- Keep a pot lid close by. In case of a cooking fire use the lid to smother the fire.

IN THE BEDROOM

- Never smoke in bed.
- Keep your bedroom door closed while sleeping.

HEATING

- Keep everything at least 3 feet from a heating source.
- Turn space heaters off when sleeping.

PREPAREDNESS

- Plan your escape routes—and practice them!
- If you use a walker or wheelchair, make sure it fits through all exits.
- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and check on them monthly.
- Keep a phone by the bed with emergency numbers on speed dial.

Fire Safety Checklist for Caregivers of Older Adults

Older adults are more likely to die in home fires because they may move slower or have trouble hearing the smoke alarm. Make sure the people you know are prepared and safe.

Put a check in front of each statement that is true for your home.

Smoke Alarms

- Smoke alarms are on every level of the home.
- Smoke alarms are inside and outside sleeping areas.
- Smoke alarms are tested each month.
- Smoke alarm batteries are changed as needed.
- Smoke alarms are less than 10 years old.
- People can hear smoke alarms from any room.



Can everyone hear the alarm?

If not, consider another type of smoke alarm – like one that has a different sound or one that comes with a bed shaker or strobe light.

Cooking Safety

- The cooking area has no items that can burn.
- People stay in the kitchen when they are frying, grilling, boiling, or broiling food.

Smoking Safety

If they smoke, make sure they are a fire-safe smoker:

- People only smoke outside and never in bed.
- People put cigarettes out safely in an ashtray with a wide base that will not tip over.
- People never smoke around medical oxygen.

Heating Safety

- Space heaters are least 3 feet away from anything that can burn.
- People blow out candles before leaving the room.

Escape Plan

- There is a fire escape plan that shows 2 ways out of every room.
- Exits are always clear and not blocked with furniture or other items.
- Everyone knows where the safe meeting place is outside the home.
- The escape plan works for everyone, including people who use a wheelchair, a hearing aid, or glasses.
- There is a phone near the bed to call a local emergency number in case of a fire.



Can everyone get out?

Make sure people who use a wheelchair or a cane can get to them and get out quickly. Tell them to keep glasses or hearing aids next to the bed.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- Carbon monoxide alarms are located on each level of the home.
- Carbon monoxide alarms are less than 7 years old.

Electrical and Appliance Safety

- No electrical cords run under rugs.
- All electrical cords are in good condition and not broken or cut.
- People clean the dryer of lint after every use.
- All plug outlets are safe and do not feel warm when you touch them. (If they are warm, call the landlord or an electrician.)

Learn more about fire prevention:
www.usfa.fema.gov

U.S. Fire
Administration



FEMA





Portable Oxygen and Smoking Dangers

(Courtesy Massachusetts General Hospital)

As the baby boomer generation ages, the prevalence of patients using portable medical oxygen to treat pulmonary diseases is on the rise. While this treatment helps patients live richer lives with increased independence, it's critical that those who use home oxygen understand the associated risks.

Normally, the air we breathe every day contains around **20 percent** oxygen. The air delivered to patients using this therapy contains nearly **100 percent**, making it extremely flammable.

- Individuals using home oxygen need to be particularly vigilant in keeping the system away from candle flames and other heat sources in the home. Additionally, there is an extremely elevated risk to smokers who use home oxygen.
- Smokers who use home oxygen may understand the need to turn the tank off before lighting up, but may not realize that the danger persists, even when the oxygen isn't flowing. Oxygen can build up not only in the home, but on the hair, clothes, and body of the patient and ignite when a heat source—like a cigarette—comes close to the face, causing severe burns. Oxygen is not flammable, but fire needs it to burn. When more oxygen is present, any fire that starts will burn hotter and faster than usual. More oxygen in the air means that things such as hair, plastic, skin oils, clothing, and furniture can catch fire at lower temperatures.

Safety tips

- **There is no safe way to smoke in the home when oxygen is in use.** A patient on oxygen should not smoke.
- Candles, matches, wood stoves and even sparking toys, can be ignition sources and should not be used in the home.
- Keep oxygen cylinders at least five feet from a heat source, open flames or electrical devices

Facts and figures

During the four-year period of 2003-2006:

- Hospital emergency rooms saw an estimated average of 1,190 thermal burns per year caused by ignitions associated with home medical oxygen.
- Eighty-nine percent of the victims suffered facial burns.
- In most cases, the fire department was not involved.



Medical Oxygen Safety

Portable medical oxygen in the home has grown over the past decade. Medical oxygen adds a higher percentage of oxygen to the air a patient uses to breath. Fire needs oxygen to burn. If a fire should start in an oxygen-enriched area, the material burning will burn more quickly.

Homes where medical oxygen is used need specific fire safety rules to keep people safe from fire and burns.

SAFETY TIPS

- » There is no safe way to smoke in the home when oxygen is in use. If a patient is on oxygen, they should not smoke.
- » Candles, matches, wood stoves and even sparking toys, can be ignition sources and should not be used in the home.
- » Keep oxygen cylinders at least five feet from a heat source, open flames or electrical devices.
- » Body oil, hand lotion and items containing oil and grease can easily ignite. Keep oil and grease away where oxygen is in use.
- » Never use aerosol sprays containing combustible materials near the oxygen.

FACTS

- ! Oxygen saturates fabric covered furniture, clothing, hair and bedding, making it easier for a fire to start and spread.
- ! Smoking materials is the leading heat source resulting in medical oxygen related fires, injuries and deaths.



Post **"No Smoking"** and **"No Open Flames"** signs in and outside the home to remind people not to smoke.



Your Source for
SAFETY Information



Portable Fire Extinguishers

A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives; but portable extinguishers have limitations. Because fire grows and spreads so rapidly, the #1 priority for residents is to get out safely.

Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary element is **safe escape**. Every household should have a home fire escape plan and working smoke alarms.

Safety tips

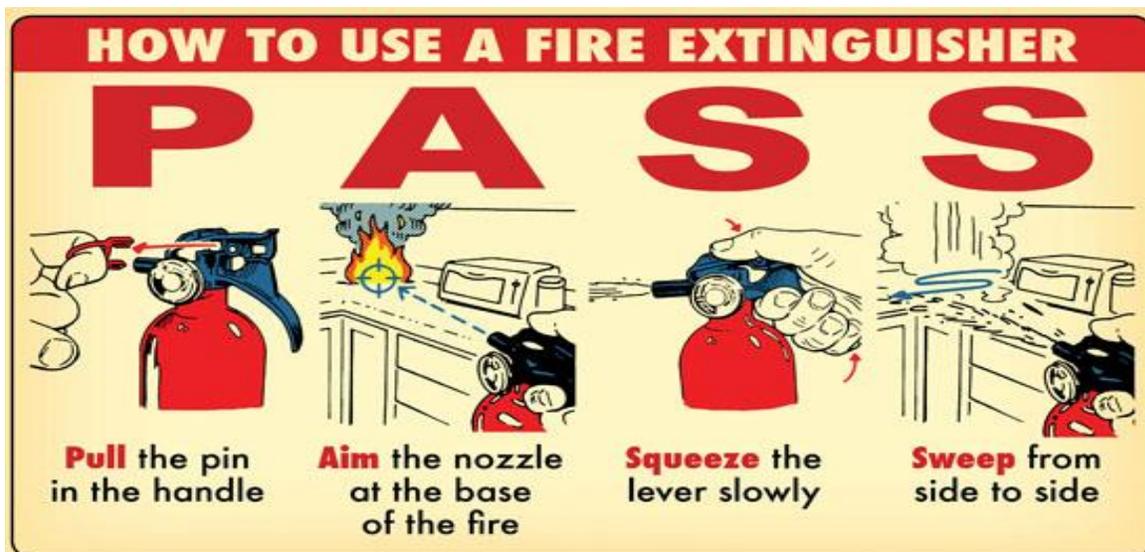
- Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area, such as a wastebasket, and is not growing; everyone has exited the building; the fire department has been called or is being called; and the room is not filled with smoke.
- To operate a fire extinguisher, remember the word **PASS**:

Pull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism.

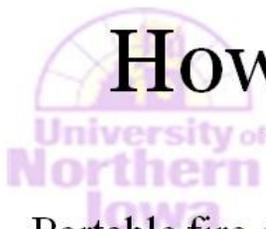
Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.

Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.

Sweep the nozzle from side-to-side.



- For the home, select a multi-purpose extinguisher (can be used on all types of home fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy as to be difficult to handle.
- Choose a fire extinguisher that carries the label of an independent testing laboratory.
- Read the instructions that come with the fire extinguisher and become familiar with its parts and operation before a fire breaks out. Local fire departments or fire equipment distributors often offer hands-on fire extinguisher trainings.
- Install fire extinguishers close to an exit and keep your back to a clear exit when you use the device so you can make an easy escape if the fire cannot be controlled. If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately.
- Know when to go. Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary element is safe escape. Every household should have a home fire escape plan and working smoke alarms.



How Fire Extinguishers Work?

Portable fire extinguishers apply an extinguishing agent that will either cool burning fuel, displace or remove oxygen, or stop the chemical reaction so a fire cannot continue to burn. When the handle of an extinguisher is compressed, it opens an inner canister of high-pressure gas that forces the extinguishing agent from the main cylinder through a siphon tube and out the nozzle. A fire extinguisher works much like a can of hair spray.



HOME FIRE SAFETY TIPS

Safety Made Simple

- Have at least a 2-A:10-B:C rated fire extinguisher on every level & supplementary units for specific locations, such as the kitchen (*NFPA recommendation*).
- Make sure everyone in your home knows how to call 911 in case of a fire or emergency.
- Test your smoke alarms monthly, change batteries as needed, and replace alarms every 10 years.
- Practice a home fire escape plan regularly with the entire family during the day and night.
- Check the gauge on your fire extinguisher monthly to be sure it is pressurized.
- Keep a fire extinguisher within reach to help create a path to safety or put out a small, contained fire. Always call the fire department before you try to extinguish a fire yourself!





Fire Safety For Those With Disabilities

(courtesy improvenet.com)

There are dangers associated with fire for everyone, but people with disabilities face unique challenges in these emergencies. People with disabilities may have more difficulty escaping during a fire. In addition, some disabilities may prevent them from taking actions ahead of time without the help of a caregiver, friend, or relative.

Visually Impaired:

- Many of the techniques people use to prepare for a fire emergency work for the visually impaired as well. For example, the visually impaired should have an escape plan in place and should practice the route, being sure to stay low to the ground. The visually impaired should have smoke alarms and regularly check them.
- However, because of their unique challenges, there are some additional steps that should be taken. For example, if a visually impaired person has a service animal, they should be sure to practice their escape plan with the animal. Also, when possible, the visually impaired should live on a ground floor and near an exit.
- It's also important for the visually impaired to know that special smoke alarms exist for their needs. Normal high decibel alarms can overload a visually impaired person's senses, causing them to become disoriented during a fire. There are smoke alarms available that pause between alarm cycles so the visually impaired can hear instructions or listen for orders from a firefighter.
- During a fire, the visually impaired should follow their escape plan, crawling to stay low and checking doors with the back of their hand for heat before opening them (If a door is hot, use your second exit). Once the visually impaired person is out, they should stay out and call 911 if no one has done so.

Deaf and Hard-Of-Hearing:

- The deaf and hard-of-hearing should follow the same fire preparedness steps, e.g. have an escape plan, practice it regularly, know how to test doors and so on. But the deaf and hard-of-hearing must go through with a few extra steps. The first and most essential step is installing a specially designed smoke alarm.
- The deaf and hard-of-hearing can buy alarms with flashing strobe lights and vibrating pillow pads and bed shakers do exist. They should have flashing smoke alarms installed so the light can be seen from anywhere in the house. Once these special alarms are in place, test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

- The deaf and hard-of-hearing should also keep TTY/TDD within arm's reach of their bed along with their hearing aids. They should make sure their fire department knows of their special needs and should reach out to the fire department for help in getting prepared.

Physically Disabled:

There are several steps the physically disabled can take to ensure their safety during a fire. According to the National Park Service, those who are physically disabled should:

- Live (or have a bedroom) on the ground floor, as close to an exit as possible. Make sure walkers and wheelchairs fit through all exits. If necessary, have a ramp available for emergency exits. Make sure they're able to open locked or barred doors, windows and other exits. Inform local emergency services of your special needs and ask your local dispatch to keep your special needs status on file.
- Of course, the physically disabled should also follow all other essential preparedness steps, such as having and regularly practicing an escape plan, regularly testing and changing the batteries of all smoke alarms and so on.

Cognitive Impairments:

- Depending on a person's level of cognitive impairment, it may be necessary to take additional steps to prepare them for what to do during a fire. It's still important to follow basic fire preparation steps, such as installing and regularly checking smoke alarms, having and practicing an escape plan and practicing getting and staying low during a fire, but additional steps may be required.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, caregivers should:

- Make sure the person with a cognitive impairment understands what the smoke alarm sound/signal means and teach them what to do when they hear it.
- If the person cannot understand what the alarm means, a plan for alerting/helping them escape during a fire needs to be part of the family's evacuation plan. Assess whether the person will be able to follow the escape plan and find their way out of the home.
- Determine ahead of time whether the person will know how to use the exits. Decide ahead of time who will give the person assistance (if needed). It's best to designate at least two people.
- Mark escape routes and/or post signs that the person has indicated they understand.
- Make sure local emergency responders are aware that someone with special needs lives in the home.

