

SAFETY SENSE

Putting a New Face on Fire Safety

(NAPSA)—The face of America's older population has changed from years past. Many older adults of today are volunteering, traveling, starting second careers, and surfing the Web. As the priorities of America's older generation change, so should their fire safety practices. According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA), the fire death rate among people over the age of 65 is twice as high as the national average. In addition, the fire death rate among people between ages 75 and 85 is three times the national average and after age 85, it increases to four times the national average. These statistics are especially alarming when researchers estimate that by 2030, the 65 and older population will exceed 70 million people. Adults 65 years and older can reduce their fire death rate by changing five major fire safety habits:

Change Smoke Alarm Batteries

Having a working smoke alarm can more than double your chances of surviving a fire.

Make sure alarms are installed on each level of your home and outside all sleeping areas. If sleeping with bedroom doors closed, the smoke alarms should be installed within each room. Test each alarm monthly and replace the battery at least once a year. Adults who are deaf or hard of hearing should invest in visual aids such as alarms with strobe lights. Flashing or vibrating smoke alarms should also be tested every month.

Change or Update Escape Routes

Many older adults are still using escape routes that were planned when the kids were in the house. Plan and practice your home fire escape. Consider your capabilities when preparing escape routes. Have two ways to get out of each room and if needed, make sure all exits are accessible for walkers or wheelchairs.



Change Unsafe Smoking Habits

Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths among Americans 65 years and older. Make sure that you are alert when you smoke and never smoke in bed. When you are finished smoking, soak the ashes in water before discarding them. Never leave smoking materials unattended, and collect them in large deep ashtrays.

Change Unsafe Cooking Habits

Cooking fires are the leading cause of fire injuries among older adults. When using the stove, never leave cooking food unattended. If you need to step away, turn it off. Also, wear tight-fitting clothing when cooking over an open flame; a dangling sleeve can catch fire easily. Keep towels and potholders away from the flame.

Change Unsafe Heating Practices

Install and maintain heating equipment correctly. Do not store newspapers, rags, or other combustible materials near a furnace, hot water heater, or space heater. Keep flammable materials, such as curtains or furniture, at least three feet from space heaters. Never use a stove as a substitute for a furnace or space heater.

For more information on senior fire safety or other fire safety topics, write to the United States Fire Administration, Public Fire Education, Building I, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727 or visit <http://www.usfa.fema.gov>.