



# Senior Adult Fire Safety

## A Fact Sheet on Fire Safety for Senior Adults

People over the age of 65 face the greatest risk of dying in a fire. On average, over 1000 Americans age 65 and over die in home fires and 2,000 are injured in fire-related incidences. The Wicomico County Fire Marshal's Office wants older adults to know that there are a number of precautionary steps senior adults can take to remain safe from fire.

### Why are older adults at risk?

- Decreased mobility, health, sight, and hearing may limit a person's ability to take the quick action necessary to escape during a fire emergency.
- Depending on physical limitations, many of the actions an individual can take to protect themselves from the dangers of fire may require help from a caregiver, neighbor, or outside source.

### Common Fire Hazards

- Kitchen / Cooking Fires
  - The kitchen is one of the most active and dangerous rooms within the home.
- Smoking
  - This is the leading cause of fire deaths among older adults.
- Heating Equipment
  - Wood stoves
  - Space heaters
- Faulty Wiring
  - Older homes
  - Older appliances

### Kitchen Caution

- Don't leave food unattended on the stove. If you must leave the kitchen, take a wooden spoon or potholder as a reminder.
- Wear short or close fitting sleeves and an apron to avoid catching clothes on fire.
- When cooking, keep a pot lid close by. In case of a pan fire, use the lid to smother the fire.
- Clean the stove and toaster regularly to avoid grease and crumb buildup.
- Use potholders, not towels, to handle hot pans and dishes.
- Don't use the oven to heat your home.

### Heating Hazards

- Keep everything at least one foot from any heat source.
- Unplug electrical appliances and heaters when not using them.
- Never hang clothes near a heater to dry them.
- Don't leave portable heaters alone or go to sleep while they are on.
- Make sure curtains hang well away from heat sources.

### Safe Smoking

- Never smoke in bed or while lying on the couch.
- Smoke only when alert, never when tired or drowsy.
- Use a large, sturdy ashtray or purchase a special "safety ashtray".
- After using an ashtray, leave it on the kitchen counter or in the sink overnight before emptying.
- Always empty ashtrays into a non-burnable container, such as a metal garbage can.

### Be Prepared

- Ensure smoke alarms are installed in every sleeping room and that they are working properly.
- Know where fire alarm pull stations are located.
- Know your escape plan; how to get to all exits.
- Keep your robe, slippers, eyeglasses, and house keys close by the bed and close your bedroom door while sleeping.

### Know Your Abilities

- Remember, fire safety is your personal responsibility...  
*Fire stops with you!!*