



News For Older Americans

How To Keep Home Fires From Burning

(NAPS)—More than 350,000 fires occur each year and often in the homes of seniors. In fact, older adults are consistently more threatened with death or injury by fire than any other age group—but you can keep your home safe by following these safety tips.

Heating Safety

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- Don't use your stove for heating.
- Don't dry clothes on a space heater.
- Have your heating system inspected by a qualified service professional at least once a year.
- Make sure all fuel-burning heating equipment is vented to the outside.
- Keep intake and output vents clean and clear of debris and dust.

Space Heaters

- Inspect heaters for cracked or broken plugs or loose connections before each use. If anything is frayed, worn or damaged, don't use the heater.
- Place space heaters on level, flat surfaces and out of high-traffic areas and doorways.
- Plug portable space heaters directly into an outlet; don't use an extension cord.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything flammable.
- Never leave a space heater unattended. Turn it off when you leave the room or go to sleep.

Fireplaces and Wood Stoves

- Have your chimney or wood stove inspected annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Use a fireplace screen to stop sparks from flying into the room.
- Never leave an open flame unattended.

Cooking

- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires. If you have to leave, even for a short time, turn off the stove.
- Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking.
- Keep the stove top and oven clean and free of grease and oil.
- Keep all flammable material away from heating elements.
- Keep towels and pot holders away from hot surfaces.
- Turn pot handles in.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- Place alarms inside each bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home.
- Don't put alarms near windows or



A few simple steps can help seniors stay safe at home.

ducts where drafts might interfere with their effectiveness.

- Never paint smoke alarms.
- Test them at least once a month and change the batteries at least once a year.
- Keep smoke alarms at least 10 feet away from cooking appliances to minimize false alarms.
- People who have difficulty hearing can get alarms that make low-pitched sounds or vibrations.

Electrical Safety

- Call an electrician if you see a discolored wall plate, smell burning, or hear a crackling or buzzing sound from wall switches or receptacles.
- Never plug two extension cords into each other.
- Make sure all appliances are plugged directly into a receptacle.
- Don't run extension cords through walls or doorways.
- Don't cover cords.
- Avoid nailing or stapling cords.
- Don't substitute extension cords for permanent wiring.
- Have a licensed electrician install an arc fault circuit interrupter (AFCI) circuit breaker or receptacle. AFCIs can prevent 50 percent of home fires.
- Make sure all appliances have been approved by a nationally approved testing laboratory.
- Have your home inspected by a licensed electrician every 10 years to determine if you have the proper electrical equipment.

Learn More

For further facts and tips on safety, from the experts at Electrical Safety Foundation International, the premier nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to promoting electrical safety at home and in the workplace, visit www.esfi.org.