

Smoke Alarms



- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement, making sure that there is an alarm outside every separate sleeping area.
- Test your smoke alarms once a month, following the manufacturer's instructions.

- Replace the batteries in your smoke alarm as soon as the alarm "chirps" warning that the battery is low.
- Never "borrow" a battery from a smoke alarm. Smoke alarms can't warn you of fire if their batteries are missing or have been disconnected.
- Don't disable smoke alarms even temporarily. If your smoke alarm is sounding "nuisance alarms," try relocating it farther from kitchens or bathrooms, where cooking fumes and steam can cause the alarm to sound.
- Regularly vacuuming or dusting your smoke alarms, following the manufacturer's instructions, can keep them working properly.
- Smoke alarms don't last forever. Replace yours once every 10 years. If you can't remember how old the alarm is, then it's probably time for a new one.
- Consider installing smoke alarms with "long-life" (10-year) batteries.
- Have a home escape plan, practice your plan, and when the alarm sounds, get out and stay out!
- If you are building or remodeling your home, consider a home fire sprinkler system.

Understanding the Risks

Why Are Older People at Risk?

Older Americans are at risk for fire death and injuries for a number of reasons:

- They may be less able to take the quick action necessary in a fire emergency due to decreased mobility, health, sight, and hearing.
- They may be on medication that affects their ability to make quick decisions.
- Many older people live alone and when accidents happen others may not be around to help.

What Additional Steps Can Seniors Take?

- Don't isolate yourself. Speak to your family members, building manager, or neighbors about your fire safety plan and practice it with them.
- Contact your local fire department's non-emergency line and explain your special needs.
- The fire department will probably suggest escape plan ideas and may perform a home fire safety inspection and offer suggestions about smoke alarm placement and maintenance.
- Ask emergency providers to keep your special needs information on file.

(804) 371-0220

www.vafire.com



Let's Retire Fire: Fire Safety for Seniors



SAFETY TIPS FOR VIRGINIA SENIORS

The facts speak for themselves: Virginians over the age of 65 are one of the groups at greatest risk for dying in a fire. According to the National Fire Protection Association, seniors 65 and older are twice as likely to be injured or die in a fire. As they get older the averages get higher. People over the age of 85 die in fires at a rate five times higher than the rest of the population.

In 2008, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 940,059 of Virginia's population were seniors. This means that 12.1% of Virginia residents were at a higher risk of dying in or experiencing a home fire. Whether living independently or in a care facility, there are several steps our Virginia seniors can take to remain safe.

Cooking Safety

Kitchen Fires. Most kitchen fires occur because food is left unattended on the stove or in the oven. Turn off the stove if leaving the



kitchen, even for a short time. It only takes a few seconds for some foods to overheat and catch fire, especially when using oils or grease. Consider using a timer that alerts the cook when the food is done or needs to be checked. Never cook with loose, dangling sleeves that can ignite easily. Heat cooking oils gradually and use extra caution when deep-frying. If a fire breaks out in

a pan, put a lid on the pan. Never throw water on a grease fire. Never use a range or stove to heat your home.

Heating Safety

Space Heaters. Buy only heaters evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Use only



the manufacturer's recommended fuel for each heater. Do not use electric space heaters in the bathroom or around other wet areas. Do not dry or store objects on top of your heater. Keep combustibles at least three feet away from heat sources. In addition, when buying a space heater, look for control features such as automatic shut-off and tip-over shut-off.

Electrical Safety

Stay Grounded. Faulty wiring is another major cause of fires affecting the elderly. Older homes can have serious wiring problems, ranging from old appliances with bad wiring to overloaded sockets. Keep lamps, light fixtures, and light bulbs away from anything that can burn, such as lamp shades, bedding, curtains, and clothing. Replace cracked and damaged electrical cords. Use extension cords for temporary wiring only. Consider having additional circuits or receptacles added by a qualified

electrician. And while you're at it, have your home inspected top to bottom for potential wiring and electrical problems.

Smoking Safety

Smoking. Don't leave smoking materials unattended. Designate a smoking area. Provide smokers with deep, sturdy ashtrays. Keep smoking materials away from anything that can burn, like mattresses, bedding, and upholstered furniture. Choose fire-safe cigarettes. Never smoke in bed.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- Carbon Monoxide (CO) gas comes from several sources, such as gas-fired appliances, charcoal grills, wood-burning furnaces or fireplaces and motor vehicles.
- Everyone is at risk for CO poisoning, particularly unborn babies, infants, children and seniors.
- To protect your family from CO poisoning remember to install CO alarms near sleeping areas and on each floor.
- Remember to have all fuel burning appliances, furnaces, venting and chimney systems serviced yearly.
- Never use a stove or oven to heat your home.
- Never use a charcoal or gas grill in your home or garage.
- Never keep a car running in a garage.
- When purchasing a new home, have a qualified technician evaluate the integrity of the heating and cooking system.