

# FACT SHEET



## A Safety Guide for Senior Adults

Perhaps you have noticed if your age is 65 and older, your reflexes and response capabilities are not always as fast as those of younger folks. Now if this is not the case you may ignore what follows, however, if you have noticed some aches and pains, eyes dimming and short term memory, let us say, declining, then this article is most definitely for you.



Our first recommendation is... **BE PREPARED!** Of course this step may already be in place, but it is a great place to start.

*Some Senior Adults take medications that impact reflexes, response capabilities and decision-making abilities.*

- Install smoke alarms designed specifically for your needs on every level of your home. That is, if hearing is your concern, provide louder or higher decibel alarms. If your apprehension is sight, then a flashing light or strobe alarm may just be perfect for your needs. Whatever type of alarm you choose, check the alarm monthly. If batteries are required, change them twice a year to insure they will work when needed.
- Place a fire extinguisher at the exit door location of each room where there may be open flame in the kitchen, furnace or electrical room, craft room, garage or any room where a chimney may be located.
- Plan your escape routes, two ways out of every room if possible. If you're located on an upper floor, then identify two stairways that will carry you to safety should a disaster strike. This practice should also be used for other buildings you enter.
- Prominently place a 9.1.1 phone sticker right above each phone in your place of residence. During an emergency, this 9.1.1 phone number will become invaluable. Call 9.1.1 from a safe location for any fire, medical or police emergency. Get to know your firefighters, neighborhood C.O.P.s and other response personnel by name.

*Often Senior Adults may not have the help they need or the ability to react to a quickly to a developing crisis, any difficulty or situation that might come upon them while cooking, reacting to an emergency or dealing with an accident.*

## LET'S MOVE TO YOUR KITCHENETTE OR KITCHEN:

- Wear short sleeves or close fitting sleeves and an apron to avoid clothes catching on fire while cooking.
- At this time in your life, never leave cooking food unattended on the stove. If you must leave the room, take a wooden spoon or potholder with you as a reminder that you're cooking. Telephone calls are a huge distraction, when cooking, ask if you can call the person back or ignore the call completely if possible.
- When cooking, keep a pot lid close by. In case of a pan fire, use the lid to smother the fire.
- Be sure to turn pot handle away from the edge of the stove. This is to protect from bumping or pulling boiling pots on to the floor and you. This will also protect grandchildren from scalding accidents when visiting. *This is a must step!*
- Use potholders or mitts, not towels, when handling hot pots, pans, or dishes.
- Clean the stove and ovens, toasters and other appliances often to avoid grease or oil and grime buildup.



*Note: Never use the oven to heat your home. It is expensive and not safe.*

## HOUSEKEEPING

- Matches and lighters are to be kept out of the reach of children in a secure locked cabinet.

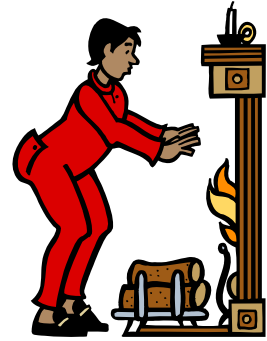


- Paint, varnish, and other flammables are stored in sturdy metal containers and in a cool location.
- Candles are only lit when someone is in the room or able to keep an eye on them and placed away from things that easily burn. *See candle safety.*
- When vacuuming avoid tangling the electrical cord in a way that it will trip you.

*Improperly used or maintained heating equipment, such as wood-burning stoves or electric space heaters, are a frequent cause of fires involving the residence of older people.*

## HEATING AND COOLING HAZARDS

- Maintain the furnace and air conditioner by changing filters often. Have the gas company or service company check you're heating/cooling equipment at regular intervals. Use a chimney sweep service to clean flues and chimneys regularly.
- Electrical heating and furnaces require at least three-foot clearance of everything around the heating unit. Another form of fire protection is clearance space.
- Unplug electrical appliances and space heaters when not in use (keep combustible materials away from these units.)
- Never leave portable heaters alone or go to sleep while they are on.
- Always hang clothing well away from heating units when airing or drying. (It is better to take longer drying than to crisp clothes into ashes by burning.)
- Make sure curtains hang well away from heat sources.



*Wiring or maintenance problems in older homes are another significant cause of fires.*

## NIGHTTIME

- Install "Automatic/Motion Safety Lighting" around the house to protect you against tripping and falls if for any reason you need to go outside in the dark (This type of lighting also protects against intruders).
- Make your safety rounds inside of the house to insure windows and doors are secure for the night. Turn down heating, and turn off any electrical heaters and or appliances before bed for safety sake.
- Check that your telephone is close to the bed stand and charging if a cell phone.
- Make sure your prescribed health needs are close, set and operating correctly.
- Before bathing, hairdryers, shavers, curling irons and other electrical appliances should be unplugged and put away. Computers are not to be used while bathing.



- Each night, keep your robe, slippers, eyeglasses and house keys close by the bed.
- Candles and or smoking materials should not be used before going to bed or falling asleep. Never smoke in a comfortable arm chair or in bed.
- Your bedroom door should remain closed while sleeping.

*Unsafe use of cigarettes and other smoking materials is a common cause of fires involving seniors.*

## SAFE SMOKING

- Smoking is a very expensive proposition. Smoking is still the leading cause of senior accidental deaths in the USA.
- If one must smoke, use only Fire Safe Standard Cigarettes. To identify, FSC may be found on the pack and carton.
- Always use sturdy ashtrays or special safety ashtrays that are placed on a non-combustible surface.
- 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.
- Never smoke in bed or while lying on the couch. Smoke only when alert never when tired or drowsy. Remember, medications may cause tiredness or drowsiness.
- Remember also, that alcohol and smoking can be a dangerous combination, especially if the smoker is under the influence of medications.



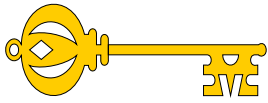
## CRIME PREVENTION

- Always keep doors and windows locked. Install dead-bolt locks on all exterior doors.
- Keep your home well lit at night, inside and out, and keep your curtains closed at night.
- Install a peephole in your front and back doors so that you can see callers without opening the door.
- Ask for proper identification from delivery persons and strangers. Don't be afraid to ask, if they are legitimate they won't mind.
- NEVER give your credit card, phone card, social security, or bank account numbers, email passwords or addresses to anyone for any reason over the phone.





- If a stranger asks you to use your telephone, offer to place the call for him/her yourself, never let a stranger into your home.
- Do not leave notes on the door when you are gone, and do not hide your keys under the mat or in any other conspicuous place.
- It is not wise to give out information over the phone indicating you are alone or that you won't be home at a certain time.
- Always keep your garage door closed. Don't even leave partly open.
- When you are gone for more than a day, make sure your home looks and sounds occupied use automatic timers to turn on lights and a radio or television. Trusted neighbors or friends may check garbage cans and mail deliveries while you're away.



In the golden years, Safety and Security in truth falls to you, it is your responsibility, you have control, and you are in charge. Team with family, faith based or community organizations and close and trusted friends. But ultimately, the key to success and safety remains with you, so **be attentive, be alert, and be prepared.**

