

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Fire Safety Tips for Seniors

Many seniors live in apartment buildings. Fire safety in an apartment has a few extra considerations—shared walls, hallways, and building systems mean you need to think beyond just your unit. A practical guide for seniors living in apartments:

Older adults—especially those over age 65—face a significantly higher risk of injury or death from fires. Each year, nearly 1,000 Americans aged 65+ lose their lives in fires. Adults over 80 are at three times greater risk than the general population.

Caregivers play a critical role in reducing these risks and helping keep seniors safe.

Apartment Fire Safety Tips

Reduce Risks Inside

Supervise or assist with cooking, especially if the senior has memory or mobility issues. Turn off and unplug appliances after use (consider auto shut-off devices).

Keep space heaters at least 3 feet from anything flammable. Check for frayed wires, overloaded outlets, or unsafe power strips.

If smoking is allowed in the apartment, ensure the person in your care smokes only when alert and never in bed. Use deep, stable ashtrays.

Check Building Safety Systems

Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms monthly. Ask management if there are working sprinklers.

Locate *fire alarms* and *pull stations* in hallways, as well as, emergency exits and stairwells (**never use elevators during a fire**).

Make sure the senior knows the sound of the alarm. If needed, install visual/vibrating alarms for hearing loss. Make sure the unit has working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (landlords are usually responsible, but double-check). Register with your building manager or local fire department if the person in your care may need help evacuating. Arrange a “buddy system” with a neighbor who can check on the senior.

A Realistic Escape Plan

The caregiver and the senior should know the *building layout*. What are the best access points for emergency responders. Think in terms of **seconds matter**: can the senior get from bed to door quickly? Are there obstacles in the path? Identify two exit options: the *primary* such as the hallway to the stairs and a *back-up* such as a second stairwell or safe shelter-in-place. Practice the route using any mobility aids (walker, cane, wheelchair). Teach the senior to feel the door before opening and to stay low if there’s smoke. Close doors behind you to slow the spread. If escape isn’t possible, stay inside, seal



door cracks with towels. If you can't leave, stay put and let firefighters reach you—many apartment buildings are designed for this (“defend in place”).

Call 911 once you are safe or signal from a window/balcony.

Plan for Individual Needs

Keep essentials within reach such as phone, glasses, hearing aids, medications and flashlight. Consider a wearable emergency alert device. Set up a daily check-in system (call, text, or neighbor visit). Inform building staff or local fire department if the senior may need help evacuating.

Prevent Common Apartment Hazards

Never allow blocking of hallways, doorways, and exit paths.

Do not use ovens or stoves for heating. If oxygen equipment is used, keep away from heaters and stove flames.

Emergency Readiness

Post emergency numbers on the refrigerator such as 911.

Keep a *go-bag* ready: ID, medications, medication list, phone charger, keys.

Hear a Beep, Get on Your Feet

Is there a beep or a chirp coming out of your smoke or carbon monoxide alarm? What does the noise mean?

Knowing the difference can save you, your home, and your family! Make sure everyone in the home understands the sounds of the smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and knows how to respond.

Learn the sounds of your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms by checking the user guide or search the brand and model online. What is your alarm telling you?

SMOKE ALARMS

- A continued set of three loud beeps—beep, beep, beep—means smoke or fire. Get out, call 9-1-1, and stay out.
- A single “chirp” every 30 or 60 seconds means the battery is low and must be changed.
- All smoke alarms must be replaced after 10 years.
- Chirping that continues after the battery has been replaced means the alarm is at the end of its life and the unit must be replaced.

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) ALARMS

- A continuous set of four loud beeps—beep, beep, beep, beep—means carbon monoxide is present in your home. Go outside, call 9-1-1 and stay out.
- A single chirp every 30 or 60 seconds means the battery is low and must be replaced.
- CO alarms also have “end of life” sounds that vary by manufacturer. This means it's time to get a new CO alarm.
- Chirping that continues after the battery has been replaced means the alarm is at the end of its life and the unit must be replaced.

Taking Care of Yourself— Friends Make Workouts Fun

Why is it so hard to motivate ourselves to exercise? Usually, it's because exercise seems like work, and who has time for more work? Time spent on exercise is not a waste of time because it will give you more energy to be able to tackle your day. When we get together with others for regular exercise, it is more fun. Social commitment makes it easier to actually show up. So, look for a local walking club, a yoga class, or an aqua aerobics class at the local YMCA. Or arrange with two or three friends to meet each morning for a brisk walk. If you live in an isolated area, look for an exercise program on television that you can tune into at the same time each day. Make it a habit.

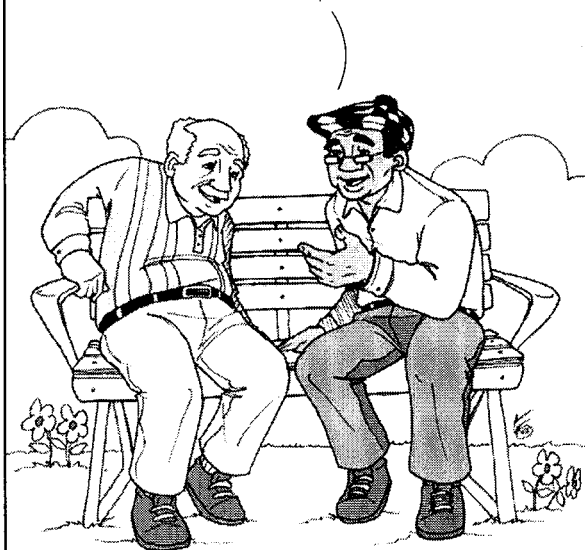


Inspiration

The crisis you have to worry about the most is the one you don't see coming.

Live Life Laughing!

My insomnia was so bad I couldn't even sleep during work hours!



Memory Care - Cognitive Challenges

Conditions like Alzheimer's and dementia can affect judgment and decision-making and ability to respond quickly in emergencies. Also, the person may not sense danger such as smoke and fire.

Also, some medications may cause drowsiness and slower reaction times.



Alzheimer's Support Group
Second Tuesday of Each Month at 5:30pm
Foltsbrook Center, 104 N. Washington St., Herkimer
Contact: 315-866-6964 x 264

Lucy's Quiet Place
Every Tuesday 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Morning Start United Methodist Church
4224 Acme Rd., Frankfort, NY 13340
315-894-4093

Catholic Charities "breathe & rejuvenate"
320 North Prospect St., Herkimer
Crystal Napier – register 315-894-9917 ext 259

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To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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SAFETY TIPS – Hidden Dangers with Alcohol

Alcohol doesn't just affect your body—it also affects your awareness and reaction time, increasing the risk of both medical emergencies and household fires. Combining alcohol with medications or unsafe activities (like cooking or smoking) can quickly turn dangerous. A fire can become life-threatening in just two minutes. A residence can be engulfed in flames in five minutes. The home — the place people feel safest from fire is actually where they are at greatest risk, with 75 percent of all U.S. fire deaths occurring in homes.

- ✦ *Impaired judgment* - Alcohol makes it easier to forget things like turning off the stove, candles, or heaters.
- ✦ *Cooking fires* - Cooking while intoxicated is a leading cause of home fires because you may leave food unattended or fall asleep.
- ✦ *Smoking hazards* - Falling asleep with a lit cigarette.
- ✦ *Delayed reaction time* - Alcohol slows your ability to notice and respond to smoke or fire alarms.
- ✦ *Misuse of heaters or appliances* - Increased risk of placing flammable items too close to heat sources.

Source: NFPA - National Fire Protection Association

NEXT ISSUE...HEAT STROKE – HAPPENS INDOORS & OUTSIDE