Fire Safety and Prevention for Seniors
A Factsheet for Older Adults

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.

To prevent scalds, set the temperature of your water heater no higher than 120 degrees.
- Never hang clothes near a heater to dry them.
- Don't leave portable heaters alone. Have at least 3 feet of clearance in all directions around portable heater.
- 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, drowsy or under the influence of medications or alcohol.
- Use a large, sturdy ashtray or purchase a special "safety ashtray".
- After using an ashtray, put in kitchen sink, douse with water and let it sit overnight.
- Always empty ashtrays into a nonburnable container, such as a metal coffee can.

Heating Hazards
- Extension cords are meant for temporary use only and should be unplugged when not in use.

Americans over the age of 65 have a fire death rate nearly twice the national average. For those over 75, this jumps to three times the national average. Whether living independently or in a care facility, there are steps seniors can take to remain safe from fire.
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At Bed Time
- Keep your robe, slippers with rubber soles, eyeglasses, flashlight and house keys close by the bed.
- Check to be sure that any space heaters are turned off.
- Close your bedroom door while sleeping.

Be Prepared
- Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home and sleeping areas.
- Check smoke alarms monthly.
- Plan your escape routes (two from every room, if possible) in case a fire does strike.
- Locate two exit stairways from your apartment building.
- Never use elevators in a fire.

During the Fire
- Get out and Stay out, then call 911.
- Test the doors before opening them, using the back of your hand. If anything feels hot, keep door shut; use second exit. If everything feels cool, open the door and slowly exit as low to the ground as possible if smoke is present.

Remember by practicing a few simple fire safety tips, you can greatly reduce your chances of experiencing a fire.

Knowing your escape plan is one of the most important steps you can take to save your life in a fire. Plan your escape around your capabilities and Practice!