

# Safety Tips for Seniors



Did you know that Virginia seniors, ages 65 and older, represent a high fire risk group? In 2006, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 886,014 of Virginia's population were seniors. This means that during the 2006 calendar year approximately 11.6 percent of Virginia residents were at risk of dying in or experiencing a home fire - nearly twice the national average! This number is only going to increase, particularly between 2010 and 2030, as more members of the baby boom generation enter retirement.

Whether living independantly or in a care facility, there are a number of steps Virginia seniors can take to remain safe. The Virginia Department of Fire Programs encourages seniors to consider the following fire safety tips to protect their households from the incidence of fire.

## **Be Kitchen Wise**

- Never leave cooking food unattended. It only takes a second for a fire to start.
- Turn off the stove if leaving the kitchen, even for a short time.
- Consider using a timer that alerts the cook when the food is done or needs to be checked.
- Remember, it only takes a few seconds for some foods to overheat and catch fire, especially when using oils or grease.

## **Give Space Heaters Space**

- Just like its name, space heaters need space. Remember to keep all combustibles at least three feet away from each heater.
- When buying a space heater, look for control features, such as automatic shut-off and tip-over shut-off.
- In addition, carefully read over and follow the manufacturers' installation and maintenance instructions.

## **Avoid Smoking Indoors**

- If you must smoke indoors, use large ashtrays.
- Never smoke while drowsy or in bed.

## **Plan Your Escape**

- Practice finding your way out of the house with your eyes closed, crawling or staying low and feeling your way out of the house.
- Never open doors that are hot to the touch.
- Teach your family to stop, drop to the ground and roll if their clothes catch fire.

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# **VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FIRE PROGRAMS**

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- Make sure everyone in your family knows at least two ways to escape from each room in the house.
- Make sure everyone in the family understands and practices how to properly operate and open locked or barred doors and windows.
- Designate a meeting place outside and take attendance. Get out and stay out.
- Remember to escape first, then notify the fire department.
- Finally, practice makes perfect! Practice your home fire escape plan every month.

## Smoke Alarms

- Working smoke alarms save lives and can double your chances of surviving a fire.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home.
- Test your smoke alarm monthly.
- Clean your smoke alarm often. Keep it free of dust and replace the battery at least twice a year. Remember, improperly working smoke, especially alarms with missing batteries, can not warn you of danger!

## Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- 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 senior citizens.
- To protect your family from CO poisoning remember to install CO alarms near sleeping areas and on each floor.
- Remember to have a qualified professional check all fuel burning appliances, furnaces, venting and chimney systems once a year.
- Never use a range oven to help heat your home.
- Never use a charcoal 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.

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