

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING SERVICES

FIRE SAFETY FOR OLDER ADULTS & PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In the United States, more than 4,000 people die each year in fires, and approximately 25,000 are injured. Special populations such as older adults, people with disabilities, the deaf and hard of hearing and the visually impaired can significantly increase their chances of surviving a fire by practicing proven fire safety precautions. The United States Fire Administration (USFA), a directorate of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), encourages individuals with special needs to use this fire safety checklist to help protect themselves and their home from fire. Personal responsibility is the key to fire safety...*Fire Stops With You!*

UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

Why are Special Populations at Risk? Special populations are at risk for a number of reasons:

- Decreased mobility, health, sight, and hearing may limit a person's ability to take the quick action necessary to escape during a fire emergency.
- Depending on physical limitations, many of the actions an individual can take to protect themselves from the dangers of fire may require help from a caretaker, neighbor, or outside source.

HAVE A SOUND FIRE SAFETY AND ESCAPE PLAN

It is vitally important to make and practice escape plans. In the event of a fire, remember, time is the biggest enemy and every second counts!

- Involve the assistance of a building manager, family member, or an entrusted friend when practicing your fire escape plan.
- Know at least two exits from every room.
- If you use a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to make sure they get through the doorways.
- Practice opening locked or barred doors and windows.
- When a fire occurs, do not waste any time saving property. Leave the home immediately. Once out, stay out.

INFORM OTHERS OF YOUR SPECIAL NEEDS

Contact your local fire department on a non-emergency telephone number and explain your special needs.

- Your local fire department will be able to help you with your escape plan and may also be able to perform a home fire safety inspection, as well as offer suggestions about smoke alarm placement and maintenance.
- Ask emergency providers to keep your special needs information on file.

DEVELOP A HOME FIRE SAFETY PLAN

People with mobility difficulties should be encouraged to have their bedroom on the ground floor and as close as possible to an exit.

- If necessary, have a ramp available for emergency exits.
- Unless instructed by the fire department, never use an elevator during a fire.
- Be sure your street address is clearly marked and visible from the street.
- Know which local emergency services are available and have those numbers posted or memorized.

INSTALL AND MAINTAIN SMOKE ALARMS

- Working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home dramatically increase your chances of survival.
- People with physical limitations should be aware of special fire safety devices that are available, such as smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or flashing light for the deaf and hard of hearing. In addition, smoke alarms with a strobe light outside the house can catch the attention of neighbors or others who might pass by.
- Smoke alarm batteries need to be tested every month and changed at least once a year. If you can't reach the test button on your smoke alarm, ask someone to inspect it for you.

For More Information Contact: The United States Fire Administration

Office of Fire Management Programs
(301) 447-1000
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

Or visit the USFA website:
www.usfa.dhs.gov

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