

Fire Safety for Older Adults

Older Adults at Greatest Risk for Fire Death

Older adults, those age 65 and above, accounted for 14% of the population, but 48% of the fire deaths in 2019. They were 3.4 times as likely to die in a fire as adults under the age of 65.

Smoking Fires are the #1 Cause of Fire Deaths for Older Adults

Smoking fires account for eight percent (8%) of all fire injuries and 21% of all fire deaths to seniors. Here are some smoking fire safety tips:

- If you smoke, smoke outdoors.
- Use large, sturdy ashtrays or a can filled with sand to put out smoking materials.
- Be sure that matches and smoking materials are fully extinguished. Wet them under a faucet before disposing of them.
- Never extinguish cigarettes in potted plants or mulch.
- If you are drowsy or falling asleep put out your cigarette. Never smoke in bed.

Never smoke while using oxygen, or when you are near an oxygen source. If you can't stop smoking, remove your oxygen, wait ten minutes, and go outside to smoke.

Cooking Fires Leading Cause of Injuries and #2 Cause of Fire Deaths to Older Adults

Cooking fires caused 14% of fire injuries to older adults in homes and 16% of senior fire deaths in 2019. Here are some cooking fire safety tips.

- Wear short or tight-fitting sleeves when cooking. Loose sleeves easily catch fire.
- Stand by your pan! Never leave cooking unattended. If you must leave the kitchen while you are cooking, take a potholder or cooking spoon with you as a reminder.
- Put a lid on stovetop fires to put them out.

Heating and Electrical Fires Cause Many Senior Fire Deaths

Electrical and heating fires were some of the leading causes of fire injuries and deaths to older adults at home. Electrical fires caused 5% of fire deaths to seniors and 2% of injuries. Heating caused 5% of fire deaths to seniors and 6% of injuries. Here are some safety tips.

(over) →

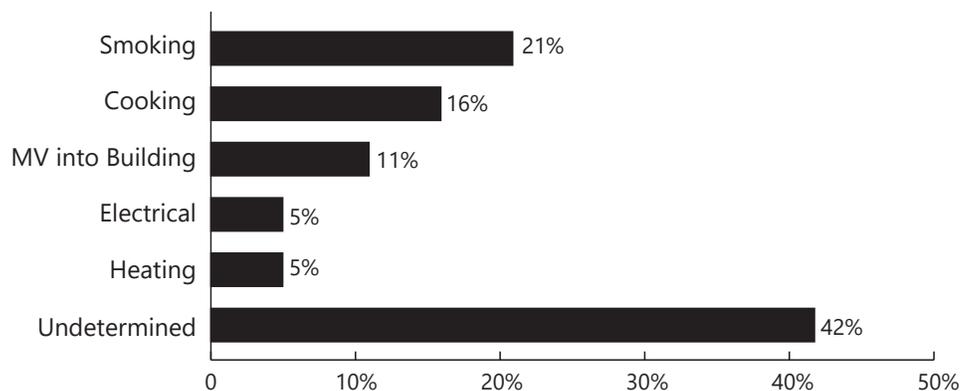


FireFactors

Office of the State Fire Marshal • www.mass.gov/dfs • (978) 567-3380

- Have furnaces and chimneys cleaned and inspected each year.
- Keep 3-feet of space free of clutter and things that can catch fire around furnaces, hot water heaters, fireplaces and woodstoves.
- Keep space heaters 3-feet away from anything that can burn.
- Plug appliances like space heaters and air conditioners directly into an outlet. Do not use extension cords or power strips.
- Do not overload outlets and power strips.
- Don't run electrical cords under rugs or let them get pinched by furniture.
- Extension cords are not designed for long-term or permanent use. Use them only for temporary needs.
- Have a licensed electrician inspect your electrical system every 10 years. Small modifications can keep the system safe and current with your home's electrical needs.

2019 Causes of Senior Fire Deaths in Residential Fires



No Working Smoke Alarms in 37% of Senior Fire Deaths

Nineteen seniors died in home fires in 2019. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the deaths were in buildings that had no smoke alarms, or had alarms that did not operate.

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area. If you cannot install alarms yourself, call a friend or your local fire department.
- Replace smoke alarm batteries twice a year and test all alarms once a month. Smoke alarms must be replaced every ten years.
- Smoke alarms don't guarantee escape from a fire. But they do give you early warning of fire. Make and practice a home escape plan so you know how to get out in an emergency.
- Keep three essential items by your bedside: eyeglasses, phone, and a whistle. Eyeglasses help you see and avoid injury as you escape a fire. A whistle can alert other people in the house to the fire, and can alert rescuers to your location. Use your phone to call for help if you cannot escape through a door.

