

Why are People with Disabilities at Risk?

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.

People with disabilities can significantly increase their chances of surviving a fire by practicing proven fire safety precautions.

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.

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.

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.

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 or 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.

Recipe for Safer Cooking: Follow these tips to protect you and your family when in the kitchen. Whether stirring up a quick dinner or creating a masterpiece four-course meal, here's a recipe for safer cooking you need to use daily.

To Prevent a Cooking Fire in Your Kitchen

- Keep an eye on your cooking and stay in the kitchen. Unattended cooking is the leading cause of cooking fires.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves. Loose clothing can catch fire.
- Watch children closely. When old enough, teach children to cook safely.
- Clean cooking surfaces to prevent food and grease build-up.
- Keep curtains, towels and pot holders away from hot surfaces and store solvents and flammable cleaners away from heat sources. Never keep gasoline in the house.
- Turn pan handles inward to prevent food spills.

To Put Out a Cooking Fire in Your Kitchen

- Call the fire department immediately. In many cases, dialing 911 will give you Emergency Services.

- Slide a pan lid over flames to smother a grease or oil fire, then turn off the heat and leave the lid in place until the pan cools. Never carry the pan outside.
- Extinguish other food fires with baking soda. Never use water or flour on cooking fires.
- Keep the oven door shut and turn off the heat to smother an oven or broiler fire.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen. Make sure you have the right type and training.
- Keep a working smoke alarm in your home and test in monthly.

Cigarettes are the number one cause of fatal home fires in the United States, averaging 900 deaths per year over the past ten years. Cigarette fires also kill people who do not smoke.

Fire safety experts recommend the following steps for smokers to reduce their risk of fire:

- If you smoke, smoke outside.
- [Choose fire-safe cigarettes](#). They are less likely to cause fires.
- Close a matchbook before striking and hold it away from your body. Set your cigarette lighter on "low" flame.
- Use deep, sturdy ashtrays placed on something sturdy and hard to ignite, like an end table.
- Don't leave cigarettes, cigars or pipes unattended. Put out all smoking materials before you walk away.
- Before you throw out butts and ashes, make sure they are out by dowsing in water or sand.
- If smokers have visited, check under furniture and cushions for cigarette butts that may have fallen out of sight.
- Don't smoke if you are sleepy, have been drinking, or taken medicine or other drugs.
- Never smoke in bed. Replace mattresses made prior to the 2007 Federal Mattress Flammability Standard.
- Don't smoke in a home where oxygen is used.
- Develop and practice a fire escape plan. In case of a fire, crawl or stay low to the ground, beneath the smoke, and use the escape plan you have worked out. Get out and stay out.

- Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home. Test smoke alarm batteries every month and change them at least once a year. Consider installing a 10-year lithium battery-powered smoke alarm, which is sealed so it cannot be tampered with or opened.