

Macomb Township Fire Department

Fire Safety Tips

August 2008



FIRE SAFETY FOR OLDER ADULTS

Each year approximately 1,100 Americans ages 65 and older die in home fires and another 3,000 are injured. People ages 65 and older are three times as likely to die in a residential fire as the rest of the population. Compared to their younger counterparts, older adults are more likely to suffer from reduced sensory abilities and physical abilities. These reductions may slow reaction times and place older adults at higher risk for causing and escaping a fire. There are other risks of injury that older adults face – falls.

You don't have to be a victim to either of these dangers. The information in this article can help keep you on your feet and safe from fire.

Careless smoking, cooking and heating practices are the top three causes of fire death and injury. We will focus our fire-safe prevention attention in these three categories and escaping a fire.

CARELESS SMOKING is the leading cause of fire deaths among people ages 65 and older. If you don't smoke, great! However, if you choose to smoke, it would be a good idea to follow these *Remembering When* tips from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

- If you smoke – smoke outside.
- Provide smokers with large, deep ashtrays.
- Wet cigarette butts and ashtrays before emptying into a wastebasket.
- Don't walk away from a lit cigarette.
- If alcohol or medication makes you drowsy or you're just plain tired, put your cigarette out right away.
- Never smoke when you're lying down or in bed.

CARELESS COOKING

Be kitchen wise. Always wear short, tight-fitting or rolled up sleeves when you cook. Keep towels, pot holders and curtains away from flames and hot burners. Never leave cooking unattended. A serious fire can start in seconds.

If a pan of food catches fire, follow these two simple steps.

1. Slide a lid over the fire.
2. Turn off the burner.

This may require some preparation. Make sure that you have a lid in your kitchen that will fit over any pan or pot you would put on a stove top. Keep it handy, but not over or around the stove – that is where the fire will be.

If a fire breaks out in your oven, do not open the oven door. Turn off the stove. Both of these fire situations should be treated as emergencies. Fire emergencies require activation of your escape plan and calling 911 for help.

Make a habit of checking your kitchen before going to bed or leaving home.

HEATING PRACTICES

Give space heaters space. Keep them at least three feet away from anything that can burn – including yourself. Unplug heaters when you shut them off, leave home or go to bed. When you purchase a space heater, search for the type with an auto-off feature that turns the unit off if it's tipped over.

Never use your stove to heat your house.

ESCAPING A FIRE

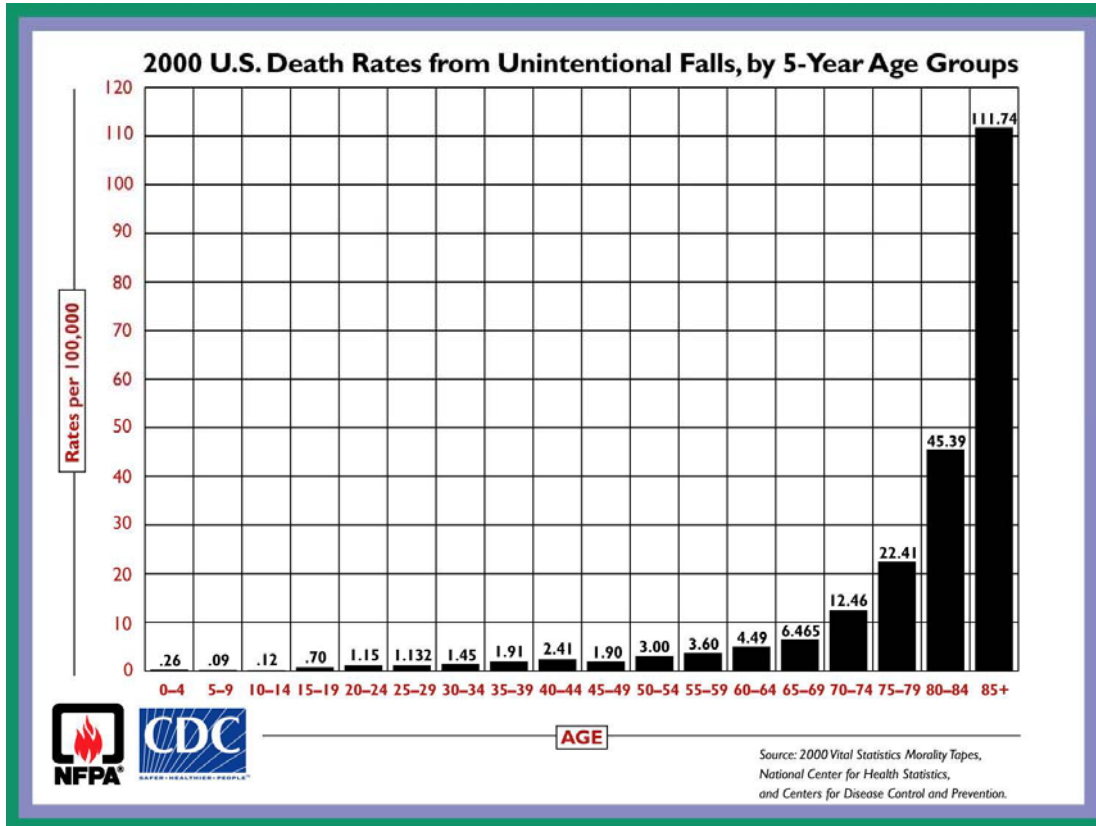
Early detection is the key. People with lack of mobility issues may need more time to escape. Smoke detectors that are inter-connected will sound an alarm on all of the smoke detectors in the home. The smoke of a basement fire will sound an alarm in an upstairs bedroom right away. No longer do you have to wait until smoke is in your room! There are battery-operated smoke detectors that can be purchased that are inter-connected.

Older adults may not test or change their smoke detector batteries on schedule (test – monthly, replace – annually). They may fear falling if they climb a ladder or stand on a chair. Also, they may not know anyone who can take care of it for them. To keep from climbing a ladder, use a broomstick or yard stick to push the test button.

Macomb Township residents can call the fire department for help with making your home fire-safe. We will change batteries, install smoke detector, provide free detectors and batteries*. If you need any help at all, just give us a call.

*Eligibility for free detectors is evaluated on a case-by-case basis as part of the Macomb Township Fire Department Free Smoke Detector Program.

FALL PREVENTION



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics show that falls are the leading cause of death from unintentional injury in the home. Following the eight *Remembering When* tips can help keep a person safely on their feet.

1. Exercise regularly.

To build strength and improve your balance and coordination. Ask your doctor about the best physical exercise for you.

2. Take your time.

Being rushed or distracted increases your chance of falling. Get out of chairs slowly. Sit a moment before you get out of bed. Stand and get your balance before you walk.

3. Clear the way.

Keep stairs and walking areas free of electrical cords, shoes, clothing, books, magazines, and other clutter.

4. Look out for yourself.

See an eye specialist once a year. Poor vision can increase your chance of falling.

Improve the lighting in your home. Use night lights to light the path between your bedroom and bathroom. Turn on the lights before using the stairs.

5. Slippery when wet.

Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors. Install grab bars on the wall next to the bathtub, shower, and toilet. Wipe up spilled liquids immediately.

6. Throw rugs can throw you.

Use only throw rugs with rubber, non-skid backing. Always smooth out wrinkles and folds in carpeting.

7. Tread carefully.

Stairways should be well lit from both top and bottom. Have easy-to-grip handrails installed along the full length of both sides of the stairs.

8. Best foot forward.

Wear sturdy, well-fitted, low-heeled shoes with non-slip soles. These are safer than high heels, thick-soled athletic shoes, slippers, or stocking feet.

For additional information, call the fire department during normal business hours – (586) 286-0027.

Next Month: Emergency Preparedness

References



Macomb Township Fire Department
Safe from Fire Initiative