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ABSTRACT

The risk of dying from fire increases substantially among older adults. This document contains a collection of fire safety information for elderly people. Information includes procedures to follow in case of fire and early warning technologies such as smoke alarms. The booklet describes potential sources of fires (smoking, home heating, kitchens, electrical hazards, home appliances, barbecue grills) and how the elderly person can reduce the risks of fires. Also presented are tips on developing a home fire-safety plan. (JE)

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Fire Safety for Retired Adults Participant's Coursebook

*For the National Fire Safety
Certification System
for the Elderly*

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Fire Safety

for Retired Adults

and Their Families

Bonnie L. Walker, Ph.D.

Bonnie Walker & Associates, Inc. □ Crofton, Maryland 21114

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was guided by an Advisory Board whose membership consisted of the following individuals:

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PREFACE

The long range goals of the National Fire Safety Certification System is to provide uniform, validated fire safety training to older Americans living independently in their homes and to reduce their high risk of fire death.

Funding for the development of the system came from the Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute on Aging, through a Small Business Innovation Research Grant award.

Guiding the project is a Focus Group made up of experts in the fields of fire safety, developmental disabilities, gerontology, training, and instructional design.

The complete system consists of four components:

- Twenty minute video,
- Twenty-four page booklet,
- Leader's guide, and
- Evaluation materials.

The Fire Safety Workshop for Retired Adults video, titled *The Need for Fire Safety*, covers topics of importance to older people living independently in the community or with family members.

The Fire Safety Workshop for Retired Adults was pilot tested in February 1991 at the Bowie Senior Center and the Belair Community Center in Bowie, Maryland.

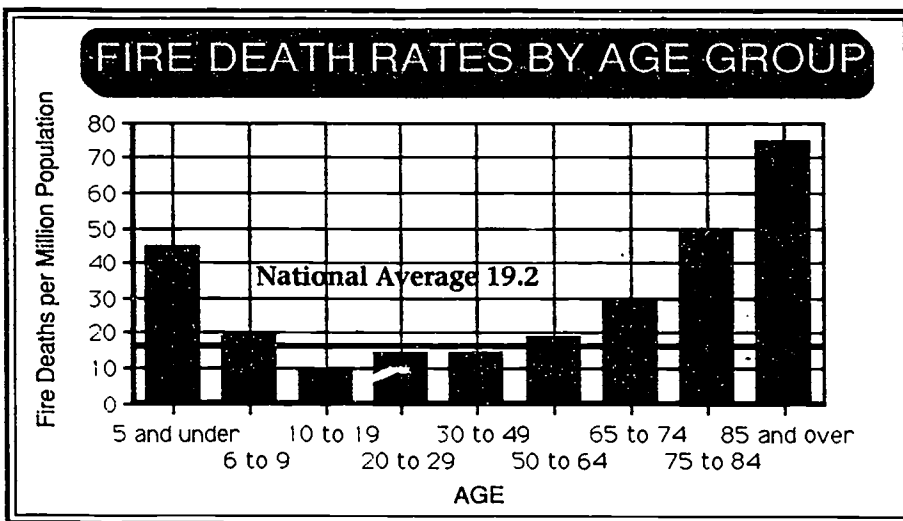
THE RISK OF FIRE IS ALWAYS PRESENT.

As we grow older, we are not all alike. In fact, we become more ourselves and less like other people.

Although we are different from each other, we do have some common needs and interests. One of these is the need for fire safety.

Consider these facts.

Age Group	Risk of fire death compared to the general population
65 to 74	Twice as likely.
75 to 84	Almost three times as likely.
85 and over	Almost four times as likely.



Fire death rates for older adults are higher than for the general population.

Major causes of home fire death for people age 65 and over

Smoking	Abandoned, discarded cigarettes, and cigars or falling asleep while smoking
Heating	Combustibles too close to portable heating units
Cooking	Combustibles and clothing too close to stove or cooking left unattended
Electrical	Ground faults, short circuits, broken wiring

A FIRE NEEDS THREE THINGS TO GROW.



You can reduce your chance of being a fire victim by increasing your knowledge of fire.

Fuel

Fuel is anything that will burn. Our homes contain many sources of fuel.

Ordinary Combustibles

- Paper
- Wood
- Cloth
- Furniture

Flammable Liquids

- Gasoline
- Kerosene
- Cooking oil
- Oil based paint

Electrical Equipment

- Appliances
- Outlets
- Fuse boxes

Heat

Fuel must be hot enough to burn. Keep fuel away from heat sources. Our homes contain many sources of heat.

- Stove and oven
- Clothes dryer
- Toaster
- Hair dryer
- Heating pad
- Curling iron
- Coffee pot
- Hot water heater
- Furnace
- Matches and lighters



During a fire, oxygen in the blood is replaced by carbon monoxide. High levels of carbon monoxide cause death.

Oxygen

A fire needs oxygen to burn. Oxygen is in the air all around us.

Portable oxygen cylinders contain pressurized oxygen which can speed up a fire's growth.



PUTTING OUT A FIRE

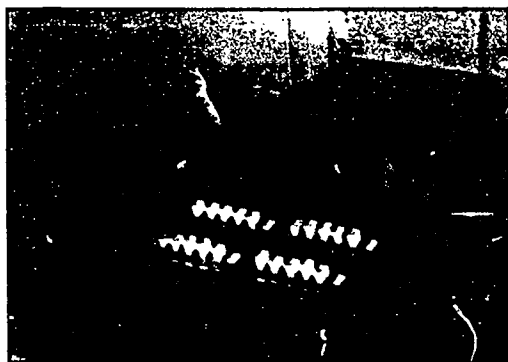
Take away the fuel.

Move the fuel away from the heat or turn off the fuel source. When all of the fuel is used up, the fire goes out.



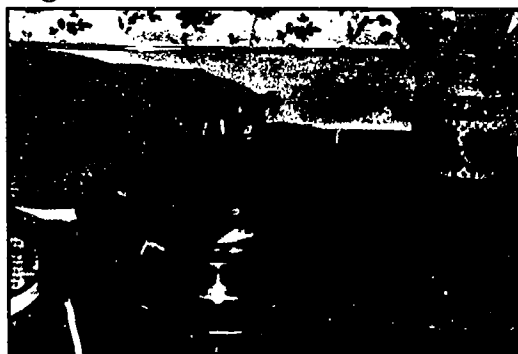
Take away the heat.

Fuel must be hot enough to burn. Removing the heat source or cooling the fuel puts the fire out. Turning off the burner removes the heat source.



Take away the oxygen.

Smothering a fire removes the oxygen supply needed to keep the fire going. When grease in a pan catches on fire, covering the pan with a lid prevents oxygen from getting to the fire. When most of the oxygen is used up, the fire goes out.



*Use portable
oxygen
carefully.
Make sure no
one smokes
near
pressurized
oxygen
cylinders and
periodically
test your
equipment for
leaks.*

NEVER RUN IF YOUR CLOTHING CATCHES ON FIRE.

If your clothes catch on fire, it is important to stop, drop, and roll. Rolling smothers the fire. Running will fan the fire, making it worse.



Stop

Stop where you are.
Do not run.



Drop

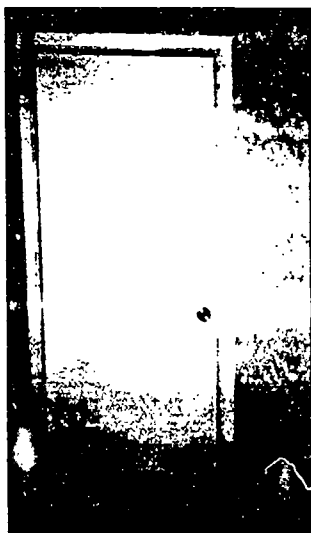
Drop quickly to the floor.



Roll

Cover your face with your hands.
Roll around until the fire is out.

SMOKE IS OFTEN THE MOST DANGEROUS ELEMENT OF FIRE.



A closed bedroom door delays the spread of smoke.

Smoke is a mixture of hot vapors, poisonous gases, and fuel particles that is produced when materials burn. Most people die in fires because they breathe too much smoke.

Smoke moves through a house much faster than flames and heat. It rises to the highest level possible. Smoke on the first floor will quickly travel up the stairs and fill the upper levels of a house.

Tips to reduce smoke exposure

- Sleep with your bedroom door shut.
- Install and maintain smoke detectors.
- If a fire is discovered, close the door to the fire area to reduce smoke movement.
- Stay low under the smoke while evacuating.

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