

# 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 29% of the fire deaths in 2016. They were two and a half times as likely to die in a fire.

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

Nineteen percent (19%) of all fire injuries and 40% of all fire deaths to seniors were from smoking fires. 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 near an oxygen source. If you can't stop smoking, remove your oxygen, wait ten minutes, and go outside to smoke.

## Electrical Fires the Second Leading Cause of Fire Deaths to Older Adults

**Electrical fires** caused 20% of the fire deaths and 14% of the fire injuries to older adults that took place in homes. Here are some electrical fire safety tips.

- It is important not to overload outlets and power strips.
- Use one appliance per outlet especially if it is a heat generating appliance.
- Don't run electrical cords under rugs or let them get pinched by furniture.
- Extension cords should only be used temporarily; they are not designed for long-term or permanent use.
- Remember that space heaters need at least 3-feet of space from anything that can burn.

(over) ➔



**FireFactors**

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



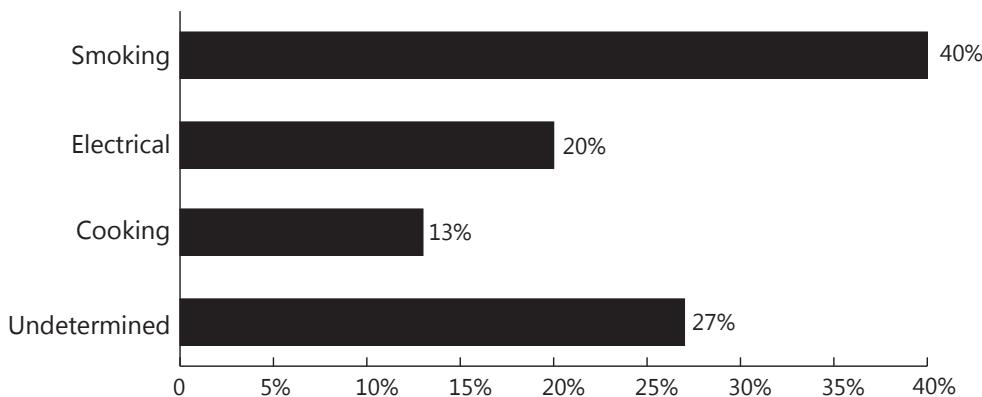
Have a licensed electrician inspect your electrical system every 10 years. Small modifications can be made to keep the system current with your home's electrical needs.

## Cooking Fires are the Leading Cause of Injuries to Older Adults

**Cooking fires** caused 31% of fire injuries to older adults that took place in homes and 13% of senior fire deaths in 2016. 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.

2016 Causes of Senior Fire Deaths in Residential Fires



## No Working Smoke Alarms in 40% of Senior Fire Deaths

Of the 15 senior fire deaths in 2016, 40% were in homes that either had no smoke alarms or had alarms that did not operate.

- Install smoke alarms on every level and outside each sleeping area. If you cannot install one yourself, call a friend or your local fire department.
- Replace the batteries twice a year and test each one once a month. Smoke alarms themselves need to be replaced every ten years.
- Alarms cannot guarantee escape; they can only provide early warning. It is important to make and practice a home escape plan.
- Keep these three essential items by your bedside: your eyeglasses, a telephone, and a whistle. Eyeglasses will help you see and avoid injury as you escape a fire. The whistle will alert other household members to the fire and rescuers to your location. The telephone will allow you to phone for help if you cannot escape through a door.

