

# Caregiver Assistance News

*“Caring for You - Caring for Others”*

**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,  
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

[www.aaa7.org](http://www.aaa7.org) **Helping You Age Better!**



**NOVEMBER 2020**

## **Fire Safety/Winter Storms**

Older adults have a 2.5 times greater risk of dying in a fire than the U.S. population as a whole. Poor vision, limited mobility, hearing loss, a reduced sense of smell, medication side effects (drowsiness), and dementia all contribute to the danger of fire for seniors.



### **The Big Four Fire Starters**

**1. Smoking.** Unsafe smoking habits lead the cause of fire deaths among older Americans. Never leave smoking materials unattended. Use widelipped “safety ashtrays.” Do not smoke after taking medicine that makes you sleepy. Never smoke in bed or on upholstered furniture. Check all furniture and carpets for fallen cigarettes and ashes before leaving home or going to sleep. Never allow smoking near an oxygen tank.

**2. Heating Equipment.** Especially dangerous are kerosene heaters, woodstoves and electric space heaters. Buy only UL-approved heaters and use the manufacturer’s recommended fuel for each heater. Do not use electric space heaters in the bathroom or other wet areas. Keep paper and fabric away from heat sources. Once a year, have chimneys, fireplaces, wood stoves and furnaces serviced. Choose the right equipment and use it properly. Cook only with equipment intended for cooking, and heat your home only with equipment designed for heating. Never use a cook stove to heat your home.

**3. Cooking.** The third leading cause of fire deaths. Most kitchen fires occur when cooking food is left unattended. If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, turn off the burner. If there’s something in the oven, use a bell timer to remind you. If a fire starts in a pan, put a lid on it. Never throw water on a grease fire. Keep flammable liquids, like alcohol and cooking oils, and paper away from the stove. To prevent spills due to overturned pots containing hot food, use the back burner when possible, and turn pot handles away from the stove’s edge. Use oven mitts when moving hot food from ovens, microwave ovens, or stovetops. Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen (but not right next to the stove) and learn how to use it. Never cook while wearing robes or other loose fitting garments that can contact hot surfaces.

**4. Faulty Wiring.** Regularly inspect extension cords for exposed wires or loose plugs. If you need to plug in two or three items, use a UL-approved unit that has built-in circuit breakers. If you see or smell smoke or sparks coming from any electrical appliance or outlet, shut off the main circuit breaker and call an electrician at once.

## **Smoke Alarms - Your First Defense**

Smoke inhalation is the primary cause of fatality in fire-related deaths. In the majority of cases, the victims are asleep when the smoke enters their lungs.

Smoke alarms are devices that are able to detect smoke or fire then sound an audible alarm. They are very useful in detecting a fire in its early stages, allowing you adequate warning to evacuate before inhaling harmful gases. For the best protection, install both ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms (some models provide dual coverage). Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home or apartment building.



- If you cannot install alarms yourself, ask for help. Many local fire companies will install free detectors for you.
- At a minimum, have an alarm immediately outside your sleeping area, either on the ceiling or high on the wall.
- Never disable alarms by removing batteries or disconnecting wires. If the detector goes off from cooking fumes or bathroom steam, it may be in a poor location and need to be moved.
- Clean alarms periodically to keep them free from dust and test the batteries. Batteries should be changed at least twice per year.

## **Fire Facts**

**Fire is fast.** In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can get out of control and it only takes minutes for thick black smoke and flames to fill a house. There is no time to grab things to take with you. There is only time to escape.

**Fire is hot.** A fire's heat can kill. The temperature can be 100 degrees at the floor and over 600 degrees at the ceiling. The room gets so hot that everything in it catches on fire at once. This is called flashover.

**Fire is dark.** If you wake up to a fire, it may be hard to see through the black smoke.

**Fire is deadly.** Smoke and toxic gasses kill more people than flames do.

*Source: FEMA; US Fire Administration*

## **Memory Care**

### **Winter Wandering**

Wandering can be extremely dangerous in cold weather. Enroll in MedicAlert® + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return®, a 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for people with Alzheimer's or other dementias who wander.

# Taking Care of Yourself

## Using a Public Bathroom During COVID-19

Bathrooms can be infectious by touch from stools infected by COVID-19. With some respiratory viruses, like COVID-19, if enough infectious particles are airborne, breathing a previously shared airspace can be hazardous.

Potentially infectious particles continue to be airborne for about a minute after each flush, and toilets can continue to generate an infectious plume several flushes after the original contaminated flush. If the toilet has a lid, close it before you flush so it traps the plume. If an automated toilet is flushing, step back to avoid spray.

The best defenses against bathroom contagions are keeping your mask on, social distancing, limiting the surfaces you touch with your hands, hand washing, and avoiding touching your face.

*Source: New York Times; What to Do When You Need to Use a Public Bathroom During a Pandemic.*



## Interested in a Telephone Support Group for Caregivers?

The Caregiver Support Program at the Area Agency on Aging District 7 is offering a free telephone support group for caregivers.

**Upcoming Call: December 17 from 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm**

If you are interested, please call Vicki Woyan for more details.

**1-800-582-7277, extension 215 or you can e-mail [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).**



## **Schedule Your FREE Fall Prevention Coaching Session**

- Over the phone or virtually - your choice!
- Completely free!
- Individualized coaching specific to your questions and needs!
- Available now through December 4th.
- Call Hannah at 1-800-582-7277, extension 247 to schedule!





**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

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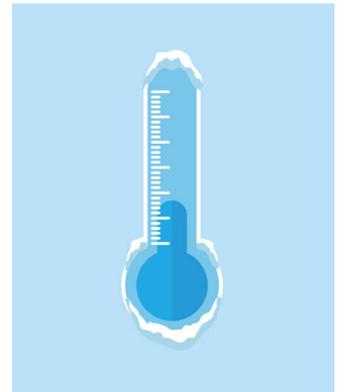
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*Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).*

## **Safety Tips - Avoiding Hypothermia**

During winter storms, anyone who wanders outdoors is at risk of hypothermia, a condition when the body temperature falls to below 95° F. To prevent hypothermia:

- Keep the temperature at home at least 65° F to 70° F if the senior is ill. A frail, older adult in a 60-degree house can develop mild hypothermia overnight.
- Wear warm clothes, including wool leg warmers for the arms and legs for added warmth.
- Use warm blankets in bed.
- Wear a knit hat indoors and a warm hat outside to avoid losing heat.
- Eat a balanced diet and avoid dehydration by drinking enough fluids.
- Keep warm by moving and walking around the house and lifting and stretching the arms and legs.



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*Some content in this publication is excerpted from *The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series*. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.*