

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 **Helping You Age Better!**



DECEMBER 2019

Fire Safety/Cold Weather Safety

The number of cooking fires increases significantly during the Holidays, so it is important for you to stay alert and be watchful while you are cooking. A range or stovetop is the leading cause of reported home fires and home fire injuries in the United States.

Choose the right equipment and use it properly. Cook only with equipment designed and intended for cooking, and heat your home only with equipment designed and intended for heating.

The Big Four Fire Starters

1. **Smoking**. Many seniors or their visitors still smoke. **Unsafe smoking habits lead the cause of fire deaths among older Americans.** Never leave smoking materials unattended. Use wide-lipped “safety ashtrays.” Douse ashtrays with water and empty them into a metal container before going to bed. 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. Set your cigarette lighter on “low” to prevent burns. Keep all smoking materials out of bedrooms. Burning bedclothes can create a fire from which escape is impossible and toxic fumes from the smoke can kill. **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 only 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. **Never use a cook stove to heat your home.**

3. **Cooking**. The third leading cause of fire deaths. For the elderly, the kitchen can be a dangerous place. **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, check it every 15 minutes. Use a bell timer to remind you. If you leave the kitchen briefly, carry a spoon or potholder with you to remind you to return. 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



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cooking oils, and paper away from the stove. To prevent spills due to overturned appliances containing hot food or liquids, use the back burner when possible, and/or turn pot handles away from the stove's edge. Use oven mitts or potholders 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.** Many seniors live in older homes with wiring problems. Regularly inspect extension cords for exposed wires or loose plugs. Unplug them when not in use. If you need to plug in two or three appliances, lamps, etc., get 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

Older adults are at greater risk of dying in a fire. 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. Caregivers can prevent tragedies by reducing the chance of the person in their care being killed or injured by a fire. Smoke inhalation is the primary cause of fatality when it comes to 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 any 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. They should be changed at least twice per year.

Memory Care

Holiday Safety - Extra precautions should be taken so that Holiday lights and decorations are fixed firmly and out of the way of those with Alzheimer's disease. Anything flammable should be monitored at all times.



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Christmas Tree Fire Safety

Choosing a healthy tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched is the first step for a safe Holiday. Reduce the risk of a Christmas tree fire in your home by taking these precautions:

- Keep the tree well-watered and check the water level in the stand daily.
- Keep the tree at least three feet away from any heat source such as space heaters, candles, fireplaces, heat vents, or lights.
- Make sure that the tree does not block an exit.
- Only use decorative lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Always turn off tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry and keep it away from your home/garage. Of the ten days with the largest shares of Christmas tree fires, none were before Christmas. For more safety tips, visit The National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) website.



2020 Census is Coming!

To educate the community about the approaching Census, please read the following educational information taken from the official website of the Census - www.census.gov.

As required by the Census Act, the U.S. Census Bureau submitted a list of questions to Congress on March 29, 2018. Based on those questions, the 2020 Census will ask:

- **How many people are living or staying at your home on April 1, 2020.** This will help us count the entire U.S. population and ensure that we count people according to where they live on Census Day.
- **Whether the home is owned or rented.** This will help us produce statistics about homeownership and renting. The rates of homeownership serve as one indicator of the nation's economy. They also help in administering housing programs and informing planning decisions.
- **About the sex of each person in your home.** This allows us to create statistics about males and females, which can be used in planning and funding government programs. This data can also be used to enforce laws, regulations, and policies against discrimination.
- **About the age of each person in your home.** The U.S. Census Bureau creates statistics to better understand the size and characteristics of different age groups. Agencies use this data to plan and fund government programs that support specific age groups, including children and older adults.
- **About the race of each person in your home.** This allows us to create statistics about race and to provide other statistics by racial groups. This data helps federal agencies monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as those in the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.
- **About whether a person in your home is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.** These responses help create statistics about this ethnic group. This is needed by federal agencies to monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as those in the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.
- **About the relationship of each person in your home.** This allows the Census Bureau to create estimates about families, households, and other groups. Relationship data is used in planning and funding government programs that support families, including people raising children alone.

Governments, businesses, communities, and nonprofits all rely on the data that these questions produce to make critical decisions.

During the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau will never ask you for: your Social Security number; money or donations; anything on behalf of a political party; or your bank or credit card account numbers. If someone claiming to be from the Census Bureau contacts you and asks you for one of these things, it's a scam, and you should not cooperate.

What Happens to Your Answers? - Your personal information is kept confidential. The Census Bureau is bound by federal law to protect your information, and your data is used only for statistical purposes. Your responses are compiled with information from other homes to produce statistics, which never identify your home or any person in your home.



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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.

Safety Tips - Avoiding Hypothermia

During winter, 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.

