

# 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!**



**JULY 2025**

## **Fire Safety**

### **Fire Safety – Smoke**

Wildfires have long been a threat to communities. While fires themselves cause destruction, loss of life, and displacement, an even greater and often underestimated danger comes from the smoke they produce. Wildfire smoke is a major contributor to air pollution, worsening respiratory, cardiovascular, and other health issues. As fires become more common, so does exposure to hazardous air.



### **The Hidden Killer in the Air**

Wildfire smoke is a complex mix of harmful pollutants. These pollutants are especially dangerous because they penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream, causing a range of health issues. Studies indicate that wildfire smoke already causes approximately 16,000 premature deaths annually in the U.S.

Many deaths linked to these events may not be directly recorded as fire-related. People with pre-existing conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and heart disease are particularly vulnerable. Children and older adults are also at heightened risk due to their developing and aging immune systems. Even those without pre-existing health conditions can suffer from respiratory distress, headaches, and fatigue from prolonged exposure to wildfire smoke.

The effects of wildfire smoke are not limited to short-term health issues. Prolonged exposure has been linked to long-term damage, including chronic respiratory conditions, weakened immune responses, and increased susceptibility to infections. The situation is further worsened by the fact that wildfire season is no longer confined to a specific time of year. Wildfires are more frequent, leading to continuous exposure in many regions.

One major concern is that as wildfires burn not only forests, but also urban areas, they produce an even more toxic mix of pollutants. When homes, furniture, vehicles, and industrial materials burn, they release dangerous chemicals. This combination of toxic materials can settle on household surfaces and linger for months. Even after the flames have died down, residual smoke and ash inside homes can pose ongoing health risks, especially for children who come into close contact with these surfaces. Visit [AirNow.gov](https://www.airnow.gov) which highlights air quality in your local area.

## Preventative Measures

Experts recommend the following measures to reduce smoke exposure and protect you and the person in your care. Caring for a person with dementia or Alzheimer's during smoky wildfires requires extra precautions to ensure their safety and well-being. If the person has heart or lung disease, check with the doctor for what you should do in smoke events.

### 1. Reduce Smoke Exposure

- Stay Indoors: Keep the person inside as much as possible with windows and doors closed.
- Use Air Filtration: Use HEPA air purifiers or HVAC systems with clean filters to reduce indoor air pollution. Have a supply of N95 masks.
- Seal Gaps: Use towels or tape to seal gaps around windows and doors to keep smoke out.
- Create a Clean Room: Designate a room with an air purifier and minimal outdoor air exposure.

### 2. Monitor Health Closely

- Watch for Symptoms: Smoke exposure can cause confusion, coughing, difficulty breathing, headaches, or eye irritation.
- Hydration: Offer water to prevent dehydration, which worsens confusion.
- Medications: Ensure they take their prescribed medications on time.
- Respiratory Issues: If they have asthma or COPD, have their inhalers or oxygen ready.

### 3. Keep a Calm Environment

- Reduce Stress: Wildfires and poor air quality can be distressing. Maintain a calm, familiar routine to minimize anxiety.
- Limit News Exposure: Constant updates can cause agitation; provide reassurance instead.

### 4. Prepare for Evacuation

- Have a Go-Bag: Pack essentials like medications, medical records, ID, water, snacks, comfort items, a change of clothes and incontinence products.
- Prepare Medical Alerts: If the person wanders, ensure they have a medical ID or GPS tracker.
- Know the Evacuation Plan: Have transportation ready and know where nearby shelters are that accommodate dementia patients.
- Caregiver Contacts: Keep emergency contact numbers easily accessible.

### 5. Seek Help If Needed

- Call for Medical Help: If the person has trouble breathing or shows signs of serious confusion, contact emergency services.
- Community Resources: Local health agencies or Alzheimer's associations may have support services during emergencies.



Applications are available! Scan the QR Code to apply or call our Farmers Market Hotline if you have questions.

**1-800-343-8112**

or email [FarmersMarket@aaa7.org](mailto:FarmersMarket@aaa7.org)



# Taking Care of Yourself

## Coping with More Frequent Chuckles

Hospitals and therapists are using laughter to improve people's health and well-being. A sense of humor is a coping skill. In relationships, a good joke or laugh can improve a tense moment. When someone is sick, making them laugh or smile is therapeutic and brings joy. Some of the benefits of laughter include:

- Lower blood pressure and reduced stress
- Better immune function
- Released endorphins, creating a feeling of well-being
- Increased use of oxygen and exercise for the diaphragm

*Humor and laughter can foster a positive and hopeful attitude.*

*We are less likely to succumb to feelings of depression and helplessness if we are able to laugh at what is troubling us. Humor gives us a sense of perspective on our problems.*



**FREE**

## CAREGIVER SUPPORT UPCOMING WEBINARS

through the Area Agency on Aging District 7's partnership with Trualta

**18**  
JULY

**Anonymous Talk:**  
Depression in  
Caregiving  
12 NOON – 1:00 PM

**Webinar:**  
Navigating the  
Healthcare System 101  
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

**31**  
JULY

Scan the QR Code to register today!  
Or visit [aaa7.trualta.com](http://aaa7.trualta.com)



## Memory Care Hurrying

*A person cannot hurry  
with Alzheimer's.  
Any pressure to hurry  
up usually results only  
in upset. Just try to keep  
focus on getting ready  
to leave.*



# **Fire - The Deadliest Threat**

No disaster is more deadly than a house fire for a person with a mobility disability. Contact your local fire department for help in evacuation planning, but make sure the advice fits the needs of the person in your care. Besides the usual advice about home fire safety, such as buying and maintaining smoke alarms and fire extinguishers, help the person in your care follow these tips:



- Buy clothing, linens, and blankets made of fire-resistant material.
- Arrange furniture so it does not obstruct a quick exit.
- Attach a small ready-to-go bag to a wheelchair or walker.
- Contact support network members to help if the individual must evacuate a building by stairway.
- Help memorize a few critical phrases to quickly explain the individual's situation to first responders or write it down.
- Practice the emergency plan regularly.

Sources: National Organization on Disability at [www.nod.org](http://www.nod.org); Healthlogy; Ready.gov FEMA; [http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/emergency\\_planning.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/emergency_planning.shtm); American Red Cross

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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.*

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7](https://www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7)

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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 email at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).*