VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Smoke Alarm Safety Tips with Special Considerations for Older Adults

Smoke alarms save lives by providing early warning of fire, yet roughly two-thirds of home fire deaths occur in homes without working alarms. Follow these tips to ensure you are protected by working, properly installed smoke alarms.

Age-related hearing loss may make it difficult for older adults to respond quickly to the sound of a standard smoke alarm. Additional smoke alarm safety warning devices should be considered in homes where older adults reside.

• Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.

• For the best protection, smoke alarms should be interconnected so that they all sound if one sounds.

• Choose alarms that bear the label of a nationally-recognized testing laboratory.

• If possible, alarms should be mounted in the center of the ceiling.

• Test smoke alarms on a monthly basis by pressing the TEST button.

• Batteries for battery-operated or battery back-up alarms should be replaced at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps" or "beeps," replace batteries immediately.

• Occasionally dust or lightly vacuum the exterior of the alarms to remove dust and cobwebs.

• All smoke alarms should be replaced at least every ten years or sooner if indicated in the manufacturer's instructions.

Smoke Alarm Considerations for Older Adults

• Test smoke alarms to make sure everyone in your home can hear them, even when they are asleep. Some older adults may not be awakened by the sound of the smoke alarm.

• Notification appliances that are separate from the smoke alarm and produce complex low frequency audible signals upon activation can be used to awaken those with mild to severe hearing loss.

• If anyone in your household is deaf, or if your own hearing is diminished, consider installing a smoke alarm that uses a flashing light or vibration to alert you to a fire emergency.

• High intensity strobes are used as a method of waking those who are deaf or who have profound hearing loss. Smoke alarms are available with strobe feature or the ability to be used with strobes. Pillow or bed shakers that are activated by the sound of the alarm are required to be used with strobes.

• Smoke alarms with built in or separate strobes can be purchased through home improvement store websites or by searching the Internet for "strobe light smoke alarms."

• If possible, both a family member and a backup person should be assigned to help awaken those with hearing loss during fire drills and emergencies.

• Smoke alarms require regular testing and maintenance to ensure they are working properly. Families and/or caregivers may need to assist older adults with these tasks.

For more information go to: http://www.esfi.org/resource.

Time to Close the Door on Fast-Moving Home Fires

A simple behavior change could save lives

As consumers we have come to demand speed. We order a book on Amazon and it's delivered to our front porch that afternoon. Order your dark roast on an app and it's waiting for you at the coffee shop. But speed is also killing people in their homes.

The pace in which a fire races through a home has increased at a deadly rate. Today, a person has about three minutes from the start of a fire to escape a house fire. That's a far cry from 40 years ago when you had about 17 minutes.

The materials used to build and furnish our homes have changed. Natural materials were used in the past, but now synthetics are more common and they burn faster. Add to that the open floor plans common in today's homes and it presents the perfect storm for a quick escalation of a fire. Research tells us that heat and speed of growth have both increased.

The results have been devastating. The National Fire Protection Association estimates that fire departments across the U.S. respond to an average of 357,000 residential fires annually. That has led to an average of 2,470 civilian deaths and 12,890 civilian injuries each year.

Lexi King survived a house fire, aided by a simple habit. Her family wasn't as lucky. Lexi liked to sleep with her bedroom door closed. Her brother's door was always open. When an overnight fire destroyed their Texas house she was the only one to survive. Her brother and parents died in the fire.

"What I had was a closed door. I had oxygen. I had time to collect my thoughts. I had time to prepare myself," said King. "There literally is not a day that has gone by that I haven't thought of them and their beauty that they brought."

UL Firefighter Safety Research Institute (FSRI) found that rooms with closed doors during a fire had average temperatures of less than 100 degrees and 100 ppm of carbon monoxide, compared to 1,000+ degrees and over 10,000 ppm of carbon monoxide in the open-door rooms.

Each day fire departments across the nation respond to a variety of calls, some more easily controlled than others. Often, residents have escaped prior to their arrival. Sometimes they haven't and residents are trapped. That's why we are leading a campaign across the community to change a simple behavior. In partnership with UL FSRI, we are promoting "Close Before You Doze" to encourage every family to make sure they close all of their doors – bedrooms, bathrooms, basement – at night to starve the fire of the oxygen it requires to grow and to give you more time to escape the fire.

There is a recipe to increase your chances of survival in a fast-moving house fire.

• Make sure your smoke and CO alarms are in working condition. Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. Install alarms on every level of the home. Smoke alarms should be interconnected. When one sounds, they all sound. Test them monthly.

• Close your doors at night.

• If a fire hits and you can get out of a burning structure, get out and close doors behind you as you exit. If you can't, put a closed door between you and the fire to buy yourself valuable time. Don't ever go back inside a burning home.

• For parents worried about not hearing their children in the middle of the night with a door closed, simply place a baby monitor in your child's room. If you can't get to your children's room because you're cut off by smoke the closed door will provide a safety barrier and you know your children have longer to survive in that situation.

• Have an escape plan, identify multiple escape routes from every room and practice them as a family at various hours.

After a fire starts, there's little time to act. Take these fire safety and prevention steps today and you'll sleep easier at night.

Thanksgiving is Coming

We would like to pass on some special advice to help ensure that this Thanksgiving will have happy memories for all of you in the years to come.

The number one cause of kitchen fires is leaving the kitchen unattended while cooking. Please remember to keep an eye on your stove and oven. It's easy to get so involved in all of the special planning, that you can easily forget about the things cooking on your stove and in your oven.

Remember that in the event of a stove top fire or an oven fire, have someone call 911 right away. DO NOT wait to call us for help.

DO NOT put water on any grease related fires. You will rapidly spread the fire and cause more damage and possibly personal harm to yourself. We recently shared a video on our Facebook page showing what happens if you do. (Go to Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District Facebook page and search through the postings for the video.)

Cover the pot or frying pan with a lid and turn off the burner. Do NOT attempt to move the pan or pot out of the house. You can easily spread the fire and burn yourself or a family member in the process.

You can use your fire extinguisher or baking soda to attempt to put the fire out. If the fire is in the oven, turn it off. If you have a fire extinguisher, use it to put the fire out. If not, keep the oven door closed. Opening the door will give the fire more oxygen and possibly cause the fire to spread throughout your kitchen.

If you cannot extinguish the fire in the first few seconds, get everyone out of the house. Treat any burns AFTER exiting your home. Do a head count right away to make sure everyone is out of the house! DO NOT RE-ENTER THE HOME! If you called 911 right away, we will be there in just a few short minutes. We know how to search the home for anyone who may be still inside, and we know how to extinguish that fire and treat anyone who may have been injured.

If you are using a deep frying pot to cook that turkey this year, (no frozen turkeys, they will explode) keep it well away from the house or your garage so that if you have an oil fire, your home and other structures will be protected. Again, DO NOT USE WATER on your deep fryer if you have an oil fire!

Have a Great Thanksgiving Holiday and enjoy that "Turkey Induced Nap" afterwards.

Calls responded to October 1-31

Fire	1
Emergency Medical Service	40
Hazardous Condition	2
Service Call	9
Good Intent	3
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	0
Special Incident	0
No Emergency Found	0
False Alarm	0
Total	55