

## Fire Safety for the Elderly

### Let's Retire Fire

The facts speak for themselves: Americans over the age of 65 are one of the groups at greatest risks of dying in a fire. Every year over 1,000 Americans over the age of 65 die in fires. People over the age of 80 die in fires at a rate three times higher than the rest of the population. However, there are a number of precautionary steps older Americans can take to dramatically reduce their chances of becoming a fire casualty.

### Understanding the Risk

Older Americans are at risk for fire deaths and injuries for a number of reasons:

- They may be less able to take the quick action necessary in an emergency
- They may be on medication that affects their ability to make quick decisions
- Many older people live alone and when accidents happen others may not be around to help

### What Fire Hazards Affect Older People?

- Cooking accidents are the leading cause of the fire-related injuries for older Americans
- The kitchen is one of the most active and potentially dangerous rooms in the home
- The unsafe use of smoking material is the leading cause of fire deaths among older Americans
- Heating equipment is responsible for a big share of fires in seniors' homes. Extra caution should be used with alternate heaters such as wood stoves or electric space heaters
- Faulty wiring is another major cause of fires affecting the elderly. Older homes can have serious wiring problems, ranging from old appliances with bad wiring to overloading sockets

### Safety Tips for Older Americans

#### Kitchen Fires

Most kitchen fires occur because food is left unattended on the stove or in the oven. If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, take a spoon or potholder with you to remind you to return to the kitchen. Never cook with loose, dangling sleeves that can easily ignite. Heat cooking oils slowly and use extra caution when deep-frying. If a fire breaks out, put a lid on the pan. Never throw water on a grease fire. Never use a ranger or stove to heat your home.

#### Space Heaters

Buy only Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) approved heaters. Use only the manufacture's recommended fuel for each heater. Do not use electric space heaters in the bathroom or around other wet areas. Do not dry or store objects on top of your heater. Keep combustibles away from all heat sources.

#### Smoking

Don't leave smoking materials unattended. Use ashtrays with wide lips. Empty all ashtrays into a metal container every night before going to bed. Never smoke in bed.