FIRE SAFETY

A smoke alarm is critical for the early detection of a fire in your home and could mean the difference between life and death. Fires can occur in a variety of ways and in any room of your home. But no matter where or how, having a smoke alarm is the first key step towards your family's safety.

WHY ARE SMOKE ALARMS IMPORTANT

In a fire, smoke and deadly gases tend to spread farther and faster than heat. That's one reason why most fire victims die from inhalation of smoke and toxic gases, not as a result of burns. A majority of fatal fires happen when families are asleep because occupants are unaware of the fire until there is not adequate time to escape. A smoke alarm stands guard around the clock and, when it first senses smoke, it sounds an alarm. This often allows a family the precious but limited time it takes to escape.

About two-thirds of home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms are considered to be one of the best and least expensive means of providing an early warning of a potentially deadly fire and could reduce the risk of dying from a fire in your home by almost half.

WHERE SHOULD SMOKE ALARMS BE INSTALLED?

Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of the home, outside sleeping areas, and inside bedrooms.

A smoke alarm should be installed and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions. When installing a smoke alarm, many factors influence where you will place it, including how many are to be installed. Consider placing alarms along your escape path to assist in egress in limited visibility conditions. In general you should place alarms in the center of a ceiling or, if you place them on a wall, they should be 6 to 12 inches below the ceiling.

- Replace smoke alarm batteries at least annually, such as when resetting clocks in the fall or spring.
- Test all smoke alarms in your house once a month.
- Do not place a smoke alarm too close to a kitchen appliance or fireplace, as this may result in nuisance alarms.

- Develop and practice a fire escape plan, because working smoke alarms and a fire escape plan will increase your protection in case of a fire.

APPLIANCES NEED SPECIAL ATTENTION

Bedrooms are the most common rooms in the home where electrical fires start. Electrical fires are a special concern during winter months which call for more indoor activities and increases in lighting, heating, and appliance use.

- Do not trap electric cords against walls where heat can build up.
- Take extra care when using portable heaters. Keep bedding, clothes, curtains and other combustible items at least three feet away from space heaters.

Keep matches and all flammable products out of reach of children at all times.
Be especially careful during the winter season with space heaters.

TUCK YOURSELF IN FOR A SAFE SLEEP

- Never smoke in bed.
- Replace mattresses made before the 2007 Federal Mattress Flammability Standard. Mattresses made since then are required by law to be safer.

TO PREVENT A COOKING FIRE IN YOUR KITCHEN

- Keep an eye on your cooking and stay in the kitchen. Unattended cooking is the leading cause of cooking fires.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves. Loose clothing can catch fire.
- Watch children closely.
- Keep curtains, towels and pot holders away from hot surfaces and store solvents and flammable cleaners away from heat sources. Never keep gasoline in the house.
- Turn pan handles inward to prevent food spills.

TO PUT OUT A COOKING FIRE IN YOUR KITCHEN

- Call the fire department immediately.
- Slide a pan lid over flames to smother a grease or oil fire, then turn off the heat and leave the lid in place until the pan cools. Never carry the pan outside.
- Extinguish other food fires with baking soda. **Never use water or flour on cooking fires.**
- Keep the oven door shut and turn off the heat to smother an oven or broiler fire.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen. Make sure you have the right type and know how to use it.

WHY ARE OLDER PEOPLE AT RISK?

- They may be less able to take the quick action necessary in a fire 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.