



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

JB Pritzker, Governor
Matt Perez, State Fire Marshal

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OSFM Encourages Older Illinoisans to Practice Fire Safety

In 2019, 47.6 percent of the 110 fire deaths in Illinois were people over 60

Springfield, Ill- The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and the Illinois Department of Aging (IDoA) are encouraging older Illinoisans to keep fire safety a top priority. Some seniors have decreased sight, hearing and restricted mobility, needs that should be considered when creating a fire escape plan. In 2019, out of the 110 fire deaths in Illinois, 47.6 percent of those deaths were people over the age of 60. According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA), older adults face the greatest relative risk of dying in a fire. In 2018, older adults represented 16 percent of the United States population but suffered 42 percent of all fire deaths. Those who are 85 and older were 3.8 times more likely to die in a fire than the total population.

"As the population of older adults increases, it's essential to take the necessary steps to stay safe. People 65 and older, are twice as likely to be killed or injured by fires compared to the population at large. Speak with building managers and/or your family to ensure smoke/CO alarms are working properly. Check on elderly neighbors and encourage them to talk about their fire escape plans. Practice your escape plan to see if you can execute your plan and time it takes to escape. Keep a telephone nearby, along with emergency phone numbers so that you can communicate with emergency personnel if you're trapped in your room by fire or smoke," said Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez.

"In addition to discussing and creating an escape plan with your loved ones, the Illinois Department on Aging offers an Emergency Home Response Service (EHRS) - available to individuals over the age of 60 who meet eligibility requirements. EHRS provides an extra level of protection and peace of mind," said Paula Basta, Director of IDoA. "Our Emergency Home Response Service is a 24-hour, two-way voice communication system that, when activated, links to assistance outside the home. Once you press the button, help will be on its way in any home emergency." For more information on our Emergency Home Response Service, call our Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or send an email to aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov.

An alarming trend has been noted by fire departments in Illinois and across the nation of accidents involving people who depend on oxygen. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that 89 percent of deaths related to fire and home oxygen use are caused by smoking. Never smoke or allow someone to smoke around oxygen tanks. Post NO SMOKING signs in every room of your home. Keep oxygen containers at least 5-10 feet away



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from any heat source. Store oxygen canisters safely and securely in the upright position, away from any type of heat source in an approved oxygen storage cart.

Keep these tips in mind to create a fire safe home:

- Know two ways out of every room. Practice using both ways.
- Remove any items that may block your way out of the room or your home.
- Discuss your fire escape plan with family and neighbors. Contact your building manager or fire department to discuss your plan if you need extra help escaping.
- Keep eyeglasses, keys, hearing aids and a phone within reach next to your bed.
- Practice your home fire escape drill twice a year.

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