

# FACT SHEET

## Fire Safety for Seniors

Each year many senior citizens fall victim to fire. Simple fire prevention is the best way to keep you and your home safe from fire. Below are some simple steps that you can take to reduce the chance of fire and burns.

### Install Smoke Alarms

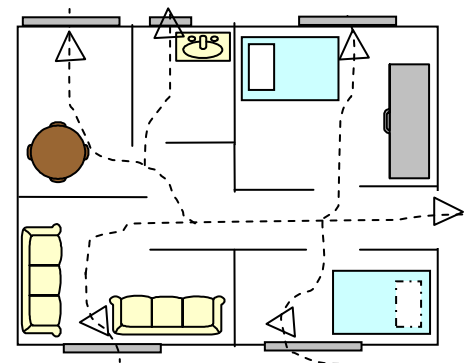
Early warning is very important in allowing you time to escape from fire. Smoke alarms have been responsible for saving hundreds of lives in Australia and around the world. They are cheap and easy to install. In some states they are now mandatory. If you do not have at least one smoke alarm in your home, buy one today. For advice on selection, installation and maintenance, see Fire Safety Data Sheet—Smoke Alarms, or contact a reputable fire protection supplier or your fire brigade.



Promptly remove waste paper, packaging, old rags and other fire hazards.

### Make an Escape Plan

- Draw a plan of your home
- Plan two ways out of every room, including bedrooms
- Make special arrangement for the frail or disabled
- Be sure that all locks can be unlocked quickly
- If an escape path is from above the ground floor, make sure there is a safe way down
- Choose a meeting place away from danger, preferably to the front of the property (a gate-post, letter-box or particular tree)
- Practice your escape plan at least twice per year, not by walking or running, but by crawling low to reach safety
- Keep a copy of your escape plan in a prominent place—a notice board or fridge door



Draw a plan of your home and plan two ways out of every room.

### Ensure everyone knows what to do in the event of a fire

- Do not hesitate
- Follow the escape plan
- Crawl low under smoke
- Test doors using the back of your hand—if it is hot, do not open it, use another escape route
- Close doors behind you to slow the spread of fire and smoke
- If you are trapped, stuff the cracks around doors to keep smoke out. Wait by a window and signal for help.
- Do not try to take possessions or pets. Just get out.
- Do not go back—no matter what.
- Call the fire brigade from the nearest phone away from the building



Make sure keys are in or very close to each lock.



Never leave cooking unattended and make sure pan handles cannot be grabbed by children.

#### See also:

Stop, drop and roll  
Children and Fire Safety  
Home Escape Plans

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## Do Not Lock Yourself In

Many people have died because they locked themselves in. It is essential that in an emergency you can quickly escape from your home. While you are at home, make sure that keys are in or very close to each lock. Do not lock a door from the inside and place the key in another room.

## Safe Cooking

- Never leave cooking unattended.
- Wear clothes with tight fitting sleeves.
- Set a kitchen timer to remind yourself to turn off burners and the oven.
- Keep your appliances in good condition and have worn electrical plugs and cords replaced.
- If a pan catches fire, carefully slide a lid over it or smother it with a fire blanket. Do not attempt to move it and do not throw water on the fire or use a water-based fire extinguisher as this is more likely to spread the fire.

## Safe Heating

- Keep anything that can burn at least 1 meter (3 feet) away from heaters.
- Make sure there is a screen to every open fire.
- Make sure that built-in and free-standing heaters comply with the appropriate standard and regulations—check with the supplier for details.
- Free-standing heaters should be fitted with an inertia switch that turns the heater off automatically if it falls over.
- Keep your hot water cool - adjust your thermostat to 50°C or less to prevent scalds.

## Safe Smoking

- If you or anyone else in your home smokes, provide a large, deep non-tip ashtray. Empty ashtrays often, wetting down contents before disposing of them.
- When leaving a room, check cushions and furniture for smoldering butts and matches.
- Never smoke in bed or while you are on medication that could make you drowsy.

## Visiting Children

- When you have young children visiting, remove all matches and lighters from within their reach.
- Do not leave children unsupervised near fires or hot surfaces.
- Make sure pot handles are turned away from the front of the stove.
- Don't leave hot irons unattended.
- Use protective covers on unused power points.