

Lake Shores Civic League

Older adults face the greatest relative risk of dying in a fire. In 2013, older adults:

- Represented 14 percent of the United States population but suffered 36 percent of all fire deaths.
- Had a 2.5 times greater risk of dying in a fire than the total population.

Ages 85 and over were 3.6 times more likely to die in a fire than the total population

The 1.2 million fires that occurred in 2014 in this country killed 3,275 people and injured another 15,775, and approximately 5,900 of those 19,050 victims were 65 or older. The statistics make clear that the chance of being injured or dying in a fire steadily increases as a person ages: Individuals 65 and older are **three times more likely than the general population to be the victim of a fire injury or fatality.**

people older than 65 are the fastest-growing sector of the American populace.

Baby boomers, the generation born between 1946 and 1964, seem especially determined to stay in their homes, or at the very least live independently. A 2014 AARP study found that 87 percent of adults 65 and older wanted to remain in their current homes and communities as they aged. However, diminished abilities and senses associated with aging expose these older adults to a multitude of fire risks. This age group is limited in their ability to detect and escape a fire and more likely to sustain an injury due to vision and hearing loss combined with mobility issues. They constitute almost a third of the fire fatalities that occur annually. So the best thing we can do

to increase the safety of seniors (of us), is to make sure we are doing all that we can to prevent fires.

Statistics show that the three leading causes of fire-related injuries and death among baby boomers are smoking materials, cooking appliances and heating equipment.

In Virginia Beach, **cooking is the leading cause of structural fires**. In 2014, 45-building fires were caused by cooking in this city.

And cooking is not only the most prevalent cause of residential fires, it is a problem that seems to be getting worse. Consider this, from November 1st of last year through January 12th of this year, the Virginia Beach Fire Department responded to 54 residential fires. **Of 54 fires, 31 of them were caused by cooking.** In plain talk, Cooking equipment was the leading cause of home structure fires and civilian fire injuries and the second leading cause of home fire deaths nationwide.

Today is the first day of Spring (although you wouldn't know it) but soon the weather will be getting warmer, who knows, it might even stop raining 4-days a week and many of us will want to get outside and do our cooking on the grill, which is another contributing factor to cooking fires. I will talk more about grilling safety in a minute, but let's spend a few minutes talking about cooking inside and how we can prevent a fire.

Rule Number one, do not leave anything cooking on the stove unattended.

- Unattended cooking was the leading contributing factor in the fires and in fire casualties.

• 66% of home cooking fires started with the ignition of food or other cooking materials
• 62% of home cooking fires

- Clothing was the items first ignited in less than 1% of these fires, but these incidents **accounted for 18% of the cooking fire deaths.**
- More than half of reported non-fatal home cooking fire injuries occurred when the victims tried to fight the fire themselves.
- Have a fire extinguisher in the kitchen
- Never throw water on a grease fire
- Make sure to position pot and pan handles away from the edge of the stove
- Best to keep small children out of the kitchen
- Hot pads / mits Oven Sticks

So that keeps us safe inside the kitchen but what about cooking outdoors on the grill?

General grilling tips

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.
- The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.

Before you use your grill:

- Check the major connection points between the gas (propane) tank hose and the regulator and cylinder, and where the hose connects to the burners. Tighten if loose.
- Check the gas (propane) tank hose for the potential (gas) leaks. To do that:
 - Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose using a brush or spray bottle.

- Turn the propane tank on. If there is a gas leak, the propane will release bubbles around the hose (big enough to see).
- If there are no bubbles, your grill is safe to use.
- If there are bubbles, turn off the tank and check connections, then have your grill serviced by a professional before using it again.
- If the leak doesn't stop, call the fire department immediately.

When the grill is on:

- As you are cooking, if you smell gas, turn off the gas tank and burners.
- If the leak stops immediately, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again.
- If the smell continues, move away from the grill and call the fire department immediately. Do not move the grill.

Charcoal grills

- There are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel.
- If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire.
- Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources.
- There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord for outdoor use.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

FIRE PITS

Fire pits cannot be larger than 3'x3'x3'

Only Clean Cut Firewood can be burned in them, NO YARD DEBRIS. Illegal in Va. Beach to burn leaves!

Cannot pose a smoke hazard.

A fire of any kind — no matter the size — demands serious attention to safety. The [National Fire Protection Association](#) and [ReadyWV](#) offer the following fire pit safety advice:

- Check wind direction before you light a fire.
- Don't use flammable fluids (gasoline, lighter fluid, etc.) to light or relight fires.
- Don't wear flammable clothing (like nylon) or any loose-fitting clothing.
- Avoid using soft woods like pine or cedar, because they can "pop" and throw sparks.
- Make sure to keep children and pets at least 3 feet away from the fire.

It's also important that you know how to [safely dispose of the ashes](#) when you're done with the fire for the night.

Smoke Alarms

- Three of every five home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.
- No smoke alarms were present in more than one-third (38%) of the home fire deaths.
- One of every five (21%) of the home fire deaths, smoke alarms were present but did not sound.
- In reported home fires in which the smoke alarms were present but did not operate, almost half (46%) of the smoke alarms had

missing or disconnected batteries. Nuisance alarms were the leading reason for disconnected smoke alarms.

The National Fire Protection Association recommends homes should have smoke alarms installed inside every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. So that means a 2 story, 3 bedroom house needs a minimum of **five smoke alarms**.

Smoke detectors should be placed in bedrooms, kitchens away from stoves, living rooms, the top of stairways. Ultimately, every floor of your home should have at least one smoke detector in it. A smoke detector should also be placed in an attached garage. I like smoke detectors in hallways leading towards bedrooms to act as an early warning for those in the bedrooms.

For safety purposes, always change the batteries twice a year. The easiest time to remember is when the time changes. every time that the time changes, Spring ahead or Fall behind, that's the perfect time to pitch the old batteries and replace them with fresh ones.

Practice Fire Escape Plan

Smoking Materials

US fire departments responded to an estimated 90-thousand smoking material fires in 2011

These fires caused:

- 540 Civilian Deaths
- 1,640 Civilian Injuries, and
- 621-million dollars in property damage

Most deaths in home smoking-material fires were caused by fires that started in bedrooms (40%) or in living / family rooms (35%)

The risk of dying in a home structure fire caused by smoking materials rises with age.


Make sure your butts are completely out before you discard them.


Electrical



if you have:


- Frequent problems with blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers
- A tingling feeling when you touch an electrical appliance
- Discolored or warm wall outlets
- A burning or rubbery smell coming from an appliance
- Flickering or dimming lights
- Sparks from an outlet


q  for hidden electrical hazards.

q  to make sure the wires are not damaged, cracked or loose. If the cords need to be repaired, take the item to a professional repair shop, hire an electrician or replace with a new item.


q  are not running across doorways or under carpets.

If they are, have a qualified electrician install more outlets.


 all receptacle outlets and switches have faceplates.

 of your home, including closets, should have a shade or globe for protection.

Light bulbs can get very hot and cause a fire if something that can burn is too close.

 such as a toaster, coffee maker, iron or microwave oven draw a lot of electricity.

Plug only one heat producing appliance in each outlet to prevent wiring from overheating.

q  that are listed by a qualified testing laboratory.