

# **OSFM Stresses Importance of Fire Safety for Older Illinoisans**

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SPRINGFIELD - The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) encourages older Illinoisans to think about fire safety, while keeping their limitations in mind when creating a fire escape plan. In 2018, out of the 118 fire deaths in Illinois, 44% of those deaths were people over the age of 60. According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) on average, over 1,000 Americans 65 and older die in home fires and 2,000 are injured in fire-related incidences yearly. The leading cause of residential fire deaths among older adults is careless smoking.

“Decreased mobility, health, sight and hearing may limit a person’s ability to take quick action needed to escape during a fire,” says Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. “Create an escape plan that considers your limitations. Don’t isolate yourself, speak to

your caregiver, building manager or family members to make sure your smoke alarms are working, and they understand your fire escape plan. Finally, if possible, live near an exit or plan to sleep on the ground floor if your home has multiple levels.”

“In addition to discussing and creating an escape plan with your loved ones is important, the Illinois Department of Aging offers an Emergency Home Response Service - available to individuals over the age of 60 - that 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.

OSFM has seen an alarming increasing trend in accidents with people who depend on oxygen in Illinois. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that 89% 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 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 reaching next to your bed.
- Practice your home fire escape drill twice a year.