



Township of Maplewood

MAPLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY 07040

FIRE DEPARTMENT

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SENIOR CITIZEN FIRE SAFETY

Senior Citizens over the age of 65 are at a greater risk of death from fire than other age groups. In fact, according to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) seniors between the ages of 65 and 75 have a fire death rate twice the national average. Those between 75 and 85 are three times as likely to die from fire and seniors over 85 are four times as likely to die from a fire. A significant factor behind this high risk of fire death is the result of fires caused by smoking materials. Other factors contributing to this risk include fires caused from heating appliances and fires caused by cooking equipment. Although additional risks include physical or cognitive impairments as a result of the aging process, the Maplewood Fire Department in conjunction with the UFSA, provides the following advice for increasing fire safety in one's home.

- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home. A working smoke detector more than doubles the chances of surviving a fire. They are the single most important means of preventing house and apartment fire fatalities by providing an early warning signal so you and your family can escape. Batteries in smoke detectors should be changed once a year. If your smoke detector starts making a “chirping” noise, replace the batteries immediately. Test your smoke detectors monthly and use new batteries when replacing old ones. In addition, smoke detectors should be replaced every ten years. In fact, some smoke detectors now on the market come with a ten-year battery and they are designed to be replaced as a whole unit, thus avoiding the need for battery replacement.
- Never smoke in bed or when drowsy. When you are finished smoking, soak the ashes in water before discarding them. Never leave smoking materials unattended and collect them in large, deep ashtrays.
- Have your heating equipment checked for proper operation by a qualified serviceperson prior to the start of every heating season. Keep all combustible materials – newspapers, rags, etc. – at least 5 feet away from heating equipment including hot water heaters.
- Never leave the stove unattended while cooking. If you need to step away, turn it off. Keep towels and potholders away from the flame. Wear tight-fitting clothing when cooking over an open flame since a dangling sleeve can very easily catch fire.

- Plan escape routes based upon your capabilities and those of the members of your family. Practice your escape plan regularly. Know at least two exits from every room and know how to open your windows. In the event of a fire, get out and stay out. Leave your home immediately; do not try to gather personal possessions.

In the event of an EMERGENCY, DIAL 911.