

## Basic Fire Safety





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## **BASIC FIRE SAFETY**

### **FIRE NEEDS 3 THINGS TO START**

- Oxygen (Air)
- Fuel (any material that will burn)
- Heat (sparks, matches, flames)

### **MAJOR CAUSES OF FIRES**

- Carelessness with smoking and matches
- Misuse of electricity (overloading a circuit or overuse of extension cords)
- Improper rubbish disposal
- Improper storage of flammables (such as gasoline)
- Arson

### **EQUIPMENT**

- **Faulty equipment and the improper use of equipment are major causes of fire in healthcare facilities.**
- Clean lint and grease from laundry and cooking equipment, ventilator hoods, filters, and ducts on a regular basis.
- Check for and report any cracked or split cords or plugs on the equipment used.

### **GENERAL FIRE SAFETY**

- Keep maintenance and storage areas clean and free of trash, sawdust, oily rags, etc.
- Keep halls and stairways clear.
- Be sure that EXIT signs are always lit up and that emergency lighting is in working order.
- Never prop open emergency doors. Fire doors not only let people out, they keep fire from spreading.



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**IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE, STAY CALM AND “RACE” ....**

**R** = Rescue any patient in immediate danger

**A** = pull the alarm and notify other employees of the location and type of fire

**C** = contain the fire by closing doors and windows

**E** = extinguish the fire or evacuate the area

**TYPES OF FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

Pressurized water extinguishers (class A fires only)

Dry chemical extinguishers (ABC or BC)

Carbon dioxide extinguishers (B and C)

Foam (or AFFF and FFFP) extinguishers

Class D extinguishers

**USING A PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHER: PASS**

- Keep your back to the exit and stand 10-20 feet away from the fire
  - **P** = Pull the Pin
  - **A** = Aim low
  - **S** = Squeeze
  - **S** = Sweep from side to side



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## **FIRE SAFETY IN HOME HEALTHCARE**

### **FIRE! WHAT A HOT ISSUE IN HOME HEALTH.**

Many of your patients' homes present fire hazards. According to the National Protection Association, more than 400,000 home fires take place annually. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reports that more than 5,000 Americans die in fires and 25,000 are injured every year! Some patients are at special risk. Those aged 80 years or older are three times more likely to die in a fire. Patients with disabilities are also vulnerable.

The program you are about to read about is aimed at preventing fires at patients' homes and at the office.

### **FIRE! WHAT STARTS IT?**

It takes just three elements to make a fire:

- Oxygen
- Fuel
- heat

When they come together, there's a chemical reaction and fire.

- Oxygen is always present. Fire needs it to ignite. You need it to live. Your job is to keep the other two ingredients- heat and fuel- away from each other.
- Heat is present in many sources, including stoves, appliances (toasters), fireplaces, lit cigarettes, and damaged electrical wiring.
- Fuel is anything combustible- that is, anything that will burn when exposed to heat- cloth, paper, wood, upholstery, gasoline, and kerosene are all fuel.

Alert families to keep combustibles a safe distance from all sources of heat and to be cautious around oxygen equipment.

### **WAYS TO PREVENT FIRES IN THE HOME:**



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1. Use proper housekeeping. Keep trash and clutter from piling up. Never smoke in bed. Keep matches and lighters out of the children's reach.
2. Store cleaning fluids, paints, solvents, oil, and similarly flammable gases and liquids away from any heat source
3. Keep appliances in working order. Replace or repair old or worn out wiring.
4. Don't overload extension cords or run electrical cords under rugs. If any appliance starts to smoke or puts out an unusual smell, unplug and stop using it until it is repaired.

The older a dwelling is, the greater the likelihood of fire. But the fact is that no home is safe from fire.

**Kitchen:** cooking accidents are the leading cause of fire-related injuries for older Americans.

**Bedrooms:** electrical fires most commonly occur here. Mattresses can be death traps if made before 1973, when federal flammability standards went into effect.

**Utility room, basement, garage:** here or wherever household heat is generated is another risk area. The risk increased in rooms where space heaters are used.

**Older homes:** outdated electrical wiring systems and overloaded sockets pose risks.

Fires are most often started by people due to:

- Carelessness, such as unsafe smoking habits;
- Forgetfulness, such as leaving food unattended on the stove;
- Negligence, as in letting children play around with matches, cooking flames or other fire hazards;
- Ignorance, such as not knowing that space heaters must have the right fuel and adequate ventilation.

## **HOW DO YOU PERFORM A HOME SAFETY CHECK?**

Assess a home's fire safety on your first visit.

### **Start Outside:**

- Locate the nearest fire hydrant.
- Identify the construction material of the house.
- Make sure the address is clearly marked and visible to the fire department.

### **Move inside:**

- Locate all exits.



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- Determine whether there is electricity and how the home is heated.
- Look for a circuit breaker or fuse box and make sure the right size fuses are used.
- Make sure space heaters have three feet of clearance around them
- Make sure kerosene heaters are never run on gasoline or any substitute fuel.
- Make sure fireplace or wood stoves are cleaned to avoid chimney fires caused by creosote buildup. Check for use of fireplace screens. Flammable items must be kept well away.
- Check for adequate ventilation to avoid the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning.

**Next, look for the following fire safety equipment:**

- At least one smoke detector should be on each level, especially near bedrooms. The detector should be tested and cleaned monthly. Batteries should be charged twice yearly, for example when daylight savings time starts and stops.
- A working flashlight in every bedroom, since smoke creates darkness and electricity may go off.
- A portable fire extinguisher in the kitchen and any other room at risk for fire. Make sure everyone knows how to use one.

**Proper use of a Fire Extinguisher:**

1. Pull the pin
2. Aim the nozzle at the base of the flame
3. Squeeze the trigger while holding the canister upright.
4. Sweep side to side to cover the fire area with extinguisher agent

**DO HOMEBOUND PATIENTS HAVE SPECIAL SAFETY NEEDS?**

**Here are some fire safety tips for your homebound patients:**

- Keep phones within easy reach. Place a portable phone at the bedside if possible;
- Identify an alternative method to reach the fire department if no phone is available;
- Post emergency numbers at each phone and teach everyone to use them;
- Alert the fire department to any disabled persons who may need evacuation help;
- Use smoke detectors with a strobe light or vibrator for hearing impaired people;
- Never smoke or bring open flame near oxygen equipment;
- If disabled, sleep on the first floor near an exit to aid escape. Avoid sleeping upstairs.

**FIRE! WHAT'S THE GATEWAY PLAN?**



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Fire is fast. In less than 30 seconds, a small flare-up can blaze out of control. In less than 5 minutes, a home can be consumed in flames. To respond quickly, every family needs a written escape plan that shows at least two ways out of each room, usually a doorway and a window. Upstairs, the plan should include a collapsible ladder to aid escape.

**Review these guidelines with your family:**

- Know the plan for every room and practice it, including when blindfolded or in darkness. Most fire deaths occur between 2am-6am. Smoke turns familiar rooms dark and deadly, even in the daylight.
- Practice using the quick release feature of any security bars at doors or windows to avoid getting trapped inside;
- Keep escape routes such as hallways, stairways, and doorways free and clear of clutter;
- Sleep with bedroom doors closed to hold back heat and smoke
- Feel the door with the back of hand before opening it. If a door is hot, don't open it. Instead, use the alternate escape route.
- Have a prearranged spot to meet outside the home such as a tree or spot on the sidewalk:
- **DON'T GO BACK IN UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES;**
- Call the fire department from a neighbor's home. Tell them if someone is missing they are trained to perform safe rescues.

**FIRE! HOW CAN YOU LEAD THE RACE TO SAFETY?**

Fires spread quickly. Heat and smoke can become lethal in no time. You must race against these dangers:

- Heat is more threatening than flames.
- Since heat rises, it can be 100 degrees at the floor level and 600 degrees at eye level- hot enough to scorch your lungs and melt your clothes to your skin. The air can soon become hot enough to ignite every combustible in the room- a phenomenon known as flashover.
- Poisonous gases kill.
- Fire eats up oxygen. Breathing in even small amounts of smoke and toxic gases can leave you drowsy and disoriented. Fumes can lull you to sleep before flames reach you. The elderly, whose reaction time may be slowed by medications or disabilities, are especially at risk. Smoke and fumes rise initially. That's why every home should have smoke detectors that work.



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What you do in the first 1-3 minutes of a fire is critical to protect lives and property. It's a **RACE** to safety.

- **RESCUE**- assist the elderly and disabled first. Follow preplanned escape routes. Remember to stay low and crawl beneath the heat and smoke.
- **ACTIVATE THE ALARM**- alert the others in the home and move to safety. Call the fire department.
- **CONFINE THE BLAZE**- close the doors and windows to keep it contained.
- **EXTINGUISH**- if small and confined to its area of origin, the fire can be smothered with a pillow, blanket or heavy towel. Or use a fire extinguisher; following the pull, aim, squeeze and sweep technique. Since fire extinguishers' contents last only about 20 seconds, get out if you can't extinguish.
- **EVACUATE THE FAMILY**- stay calm. Give clear, exact directions.

For non-ambulatory patients, use a wheelchair if available or even a wheeled bed. If someone can assist you, use the "swing carry" to form a cradle with your arms behind the patient's knees and back. Use the "drag blanket" to move a patient to safety by yourself. If a patient's clothing catches fire, use a blanket to smother the flames or initiate the "stop, drop, and roll" technique and move to safety while staying beneath the poisonous fumes. Once everyone is moved to safety, administer first aid. Get medical help to the scene if needed. Keep all persons out of the home until the fire department says it is safe to reenter.

#### **FIRE! HOW CAN FAMILIES PUT "LEARN TO, DON'T BURN" IDEAS INTO ACTION?**

- Teach your families to prevent fire hazards. You can't insist on safety measures in someone else's home, but you can point out potential hazards. Here are some ideas to improve risky situations:
- Carry a large spoon from the kitchen as a reminder that food is on the stove if the telephone or doorbell rings while cooking.
- Avoid wearing loose, dangling sleeves that can catch fire when cooking.
- Never put metal dishes in a microwave.
- Never smoke in bed or near oxygen sources. Careless smoking habits are leading causes of fire-related deaths. Smokers should use a large wide-mouthed ashtray, and then douse its contents with water or empty it into the toilet before going to bed.
- Be alert to and correct hazards such as the dangerous use of space heaters, piled up trash, or flammable objects near heat sources.
- Set up medical equipment safely. Use proper electrical hookup, place equipment well away from any heat source. And follow any special equipment considerations.



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- Educate families about home safety checklists, seasonal heating tips or holiday fire prevention. Reinforce with printed materials.

### **Summary**

Remember to assess homes for fire hazards and teach families how to prevent them. Make sure you know and follow all **of CareCo Medical, Inc.** fire safety drills, programs and policies. You could help prevent dangerous fires and save lives.