

# Fire Safety Checklist for Loved Ones

“Older & Wiser”®

When it comes to fire, adults over age 65 are at greater risk than any other group. As most fire deaths occur in the home, it is important that older people know how to protect themselves. If you have a relative or friend in this vulnerable group, please take a few minutes to complete this fire safety check of their home. It could be a lifesaver.

**Part A** is the physical fire safety check of the older adult’s home. It should be conducted once each month by a relative or friend.

**Part B** consists of 14 questions to ask the older adult. These questions should be asked once, with periodic reminders.

## What to do if you are concerned:

If possible, take measures to correct the situation. Advise the older person that he/she is at risk of fire and injury. Remember, it is extremely difficult to change established habits. If the older person will not change the risky behaviour – such as smoking in bed – appropriate safeguards must be put in place or alternative plans made. Contact the Amherstburg Fire Department at 519-736-6500 or the Community Care Access Centre in your area for advice or assistance.

## PART A – Conduct the following fire safety checks:

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Check that there are working smoke alarms on every level of the home and outside sleeping areas.</b>  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Make sure the older person can hear the alarm when it activates.</b><br><i>If they can't contact the Amherstburg Fire Department at 519-736-6500 for advice.</i>  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Check that the smoke alarms have been tested.</b><br><i>If not, test the smoke alarms by pressing the alarm test button, which is usually located in the centre of the alarm. If it is difficult to reach, use a broom handle, cane or yardstick.</i>   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Check that the batteries have been changed within the past year.</b><br><i>Batteries should be replaced each year. It is a good idea to mark the date on the batteries so that anyone will know when it was replaced. A chirping sound indicates a low battery, but this sound can be difficult for an older person to hear or recognize.</i> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Check for scorch marks on pots and pans.</b><br><i>If you find scorch marks, discuss the situation with your older friend or relative. He/she may be leaving cooking unattended.</i>  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Check that clothing, bedding, furniture and floors are free of cigarette burns.</b><br><i>If you find cigarette burns, discuss the situation with your older friend or relative.</i>  |

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## **PART B** – Ask your older friend or relative the following questions:

### **Do you know how to leave quickly if there's a fire?**

Check that the older person knows two ways out in case the main route is blocked by smoke or flames. Check that all doors and windows in the escape route can be easily opened and aren't blocked in any way.

### **Do you have a neighbour who can help in an emergency?**

Can your friend or relative walk to a neighbour's house to call the fire department? In apartments, is there a neighbour who can help when the alarm sounds?

### **Is there a phone near the bed in case you need help?**

Make sure the emergency number is posted on the phone.

### **What would you do if the room filled with smoke?**

Demonstrate how to crawl low under smoke to safety.

### **For apartment residents – Do you know the sound of the fire alarm and what to do when the alarm sounds?**

Find out the correct procedures from building management.

### **Do you ever leave cooking unattended?**

Tell the older person to turn off the stove before leaving the kitchen, use a timer as a reminder, or take an item from the kitchen with you as a reminder, like a potholder or a utensil.

### **Do you know what to do if a pot on the stove catches fire?**

Keep a proper fitting lid nearby and slide it over the burning pot.

### **Are there combustibles, such as tea towels or curtains near the stove?**

Keep anything that can easily catch fire 1 metre (3 feet) away from the stove, including above the cook top.

### **Do you wear tight-fitting or rolled up sleeves when you use the stove?**

Dangling sleeves can easily brush against a hot burner and catch fire.

### **Are you careful not to reach over hot burners?**

Use the front burners as much as possible.

### **Do you keep portable heaters at least 1 metre (3 feet) away from any combustible materials, such as drapes, clothing, furniture, bedding and people?**

Inform your friend or relative that new portable heaters are economical, more energy efficient and have enhanced safety features.

### **Do you consider yourself to be a careful smoker?**

Smokers should use large safety ashtrays featuring a centre island.

### **Where do you empty your ashtrays?**

Ashtrays should be emptied into the toilet or a non-combustible can.

### **Are you careful when you drink and smoke? What about when taking medication?**

Drinking alcohol while smoking is a deadly combination and accounts for many fire deaths. Medication can also cause impairment.