

For further information about:

- Occupational Therapy/Physiotherapy Services/ publicly funded personal alarms contact your local community health centre
- Smoke alarm subsidy for Deaf and hard of hearing contact Vicdeaf 9473 1111 TTY 9473 1199 info@vicdeaf.com.au
- Assisted living  
Yooralla Independent Living Centre 9666 4500  
yooralla@yooralla.com.au
- Services and equipment for people who are blind or have low vision Contact Vision Australia 1300 84 74 66,  
info@visionaustralia.org.au
- Living with dementia  
Alzheimer's Australia Vic 9815 7800 alz@alzvic.asn.au
- Fire safety presentations for seniors groups, smoke alarms or hoarding and fire risk contact MFB Community Resilience –  
(03) 9665 4464 – commres@mfb.vic.gov.au



**Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) [www.mfb.vic.gov.au](http://www.mfb.vic.gov.au)**



## Fire safety for older people and people with disability

Older people and people with disability are at higher risk of being injured or not surviving a fire in their home. This usually occurs when disability or illness affects individual ability. Consider your situation. Will reduced hearing or vision mean you are slower to realise there is a fire? Will reduced mobility affect how you would safely escape a fire in your home? The information in this brochure, together with the home fire safety booklet has been designed to assist you to reduce your fire risk.

### Early Warning

Fire fatalities involving older people and people with disability occur more often in homes where there are no working smoke alarms or poorly located smoke alarms. Early warning is vital for everyone. For people who live with disability it is crucial.

- **More than one smoke alarm**

More than one smoke alarm increases your early warning of a fire. Think about you and your home. Do you close doors to other parts of the house? In which part is the smoke alarm? If you are a smoker, do you have a smoke alarm in every room in which you smoke? Are you sometimes affected by medication or alcohol? Will a smoke alarm at the other end of the house wake or alert you?

- **Interconnected smoke alarms**

Smoke alarms can be interconnected by either wireless or simple wiring inside the roof. This means if a smoke alarm operates in one room of your home, all the connected smoke alarms in your home will be activated.

- **Smoke alarms for Deaf and hard of hearing**

Smoke alarms for the Deaf and hard of hearing work in conjunction with a strobe light and vibrating bed pad. You may be eligible for a government funded subsidy. If you are an Office of Housing tenant you should contact your local housing office for more information.

- **Smoke alarms linked to personal alarms**

A smoke alarm linked to personal alarms means if the smoke alarm is activated an alert will register at the personal alarm monitoring agency. These are not currently available via the government subsidised personal alarm program.

- **Testing**

It is vital that your smoke alarm is tested every month. Ask a family member, friend or neighbour to show you how to do this or seek their assistance to do this for you.

## Responding to a fire

MFB recommends people with reduced ability, get out rather than attempt to fight a fire. A home escape plan will ensure you can safely escape in any emergency at any time of the day or night. Practise with a family carer, friend or neighbour so that they can assist you to identify any improvements. Make sure to:

- Locate your bedroom close to an exit,
- Keep your bedroom clear of clutter with good access around your bed and doorway,
- Store mobility aids in easy reach in the bedroom at night,

- Consider leaving all internal doors open at night for easy evacuation,
- If you have a personal alarm wear this in bed
- When you are home put keys in deadlock doors or security screens and never deadlock doors when you are home,
- Get down as low as you can to stay out of the smoke when evacuating,
- Get out and stay out,
- Call Triple Zero (000) or get a neighbour to do this for you.

If you cannot evacuate from your home without assistance you should:

- Have a telephone by your bed and pre-programmed with Triple Zero (000),
- Dial Triple Zero (000), wait for the operator and say FIRE, wait to be connected and tell them you have a fire and need evacuation assistance,
- Stay on the phone so you can tell them where to find you,
- Get down as low as you can and stay out of the smoke and heat,
- If you can, close the door to the room you are in and place towels, bedding and/or clothing under the door to reduce smoke coming in.

## Other advice

- Make sure your house number is clearly visible from the street so emergency services can easily find your home,
- If you experience difficulty moving around your home on a day to day basis this may affect how quickly you can safely evacuate in an emergency. Consider a Physiotherapy and/or Occupational Therapy assessment for advice and information to maximise your independence and safety,
- If you are experiencing difficulty managing tasks such as cooking safely consider approaching your local council or a private provider for assistance and or delivered meals,
- Compulsive hoarding significantly increases the risk of having a fire and being unable to escape, keep pathways and door ways clear of accumulated items,
- If you use medical oxygen always follow the safety advice provided by your supplier. Failure to do so will increase the likelihood of a fire and increase the intensity.