

# Fire Safety for Older Adults

## ***Older Adults at Greatest Risk for Fire Death***

Older adults, those age 65 and above, accounted for 14% of the population but 28% of the fire deaths in 2003. They are two times more likely to die in a fire.

## ***Smoking Leading Cause of Fire Deaths; Seniors at Highest Risk***

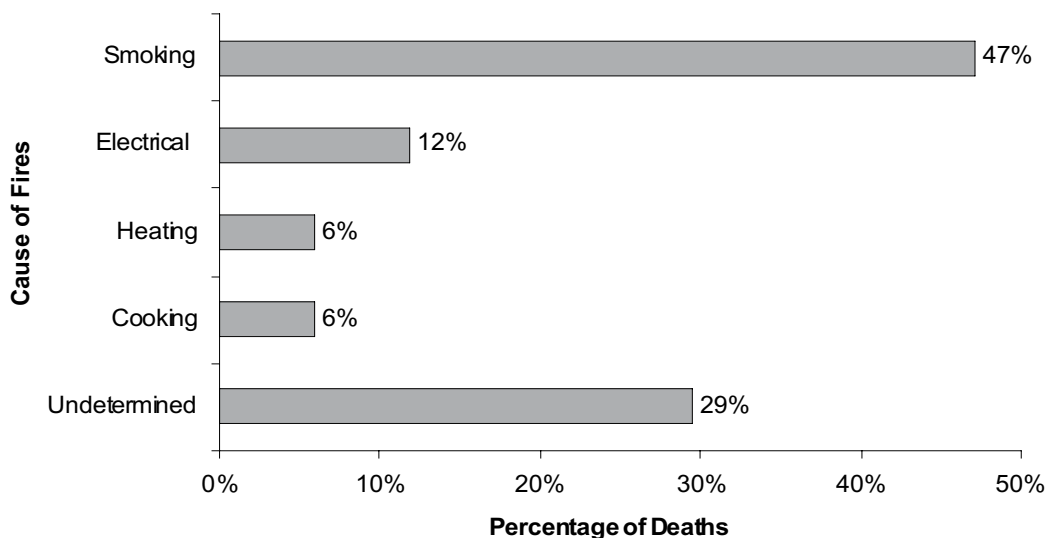
Smoking caused 1/2 of the 17 senior fire deaths that took place in homes. An alarming new trend is fires resulting in critical injuries and deaths started when people smoke while using a home oxygen system.

- Do not leave smoking materials unattended. Never smoke in bed. If you begin to feel drowsy while watching television or reading, extinguish your cigarette or cigar before you nod off. Better yet, try to quit!

## ***Electrical fires caused two fire deaths; all of the victims were over age 65.***

- Never overload electrical outlets. Power strips may allow you to plug more than one appliance into an outlet, but only one at a time should be turned on!
- Follow all manufacturer's instructions when using extension cords.

**Causes of Senior Fire Deaths in 2003**



## ***FireFACTORS***

**Office of the State Fire Marshal  
Department of Fire Services**

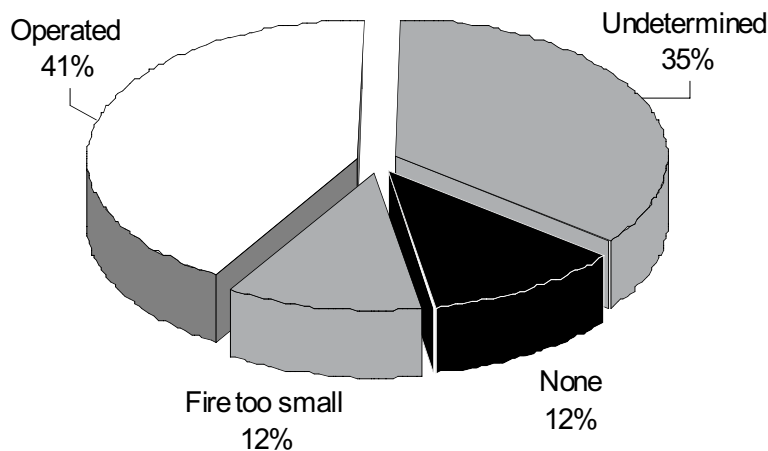
P.O. Box 1025 State Road • Stow, Massachusetts 01775 • (978) 567-3300 • [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs)

**Over 1/4 of the seniors that died in 2003 fires did not have a working smoke detector!**

Of the 17 senior deaths, 24% died in their homes where either no detectors were present or detectors were present but did not operate. 35% were undetermined.

- Install smoke detectors on every level and outside each sleeping area. If you cannot install one yourself, call a friend or your local fire department.
- Replace the batteries twice a year and test each one once a month. Detectors themselves need to be replaced every 10 years.

**Smoke Detector Performance  
& Senior Fire Deaths**



- Keep these three essential items by your bedside: your eyeglasses, telephone, and a whistle. Eyeglasses will help you see and to avoid injury as you escape the fire; the whistle will alert other household members to the fire and rescuers to your location; and the telephone will allow you to phone for help if you cannot escape by door.

**Cooking Leading Cause of Fire Injury to Seniors**

Seniors were at the greatest risk for cooking injuries, 27% of all fire injuries to seniors were from cooking fires.

- Wear short or tightfitting sleeves when cooking. Loose sleeves easily catch fire.
- Stand by your pan! Never leave cooking unattended. If you must leave the kitchen while you are cooking, take a potholder or cooking spoon with you as a reminder.