**FIRE SAFETY**

*In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can race through a home and turn into a major fire. And, it only takes a minute for a home to be filled with thick, black smoke! The good news is that most fires are preventable. Here are fire safety tips:*

- If your clients smoke, make sure they use large, deep non-tip ashtrays. Empty the ashtrays frequently—and make sure to wet the contents before dumping them into the garbage.
- Don’t let anyone smoke in areas where oxygen is in use.
- Never allow clients to smoke in bed. Smoking in bed is the number one cause of fire in seniors’ homes.
- If you discover that your client sleeps with a space heater operating, discuss the situation with your supervisor. Space heaters are the number two cause of fire in older people’s homes.
- If you notice that the lights in a client’s home flicker, smell bad or make noise, tell your supervisor. The electrical wiring in the house may be at risk for starting a fire.
- Keep things that can catch on fire (paper, curtains, linens, etc.) away from hot devices such as stoves, radiators or reading lamps.
- If grease catches on fire, don’t put water on it. Water will only make the fire spread! Try to smother the fire using a pot cover or a fire extinguisher.
- Know where fire extinguishers are located in your clients’ homes. Using a fire extinguisher is easy if you remember the word, PASS. It stands for: **P**ull, **A**im, **S**queeze and **S**weep.
- Always call the fire department *before* trying to put out a fire. Why? If the fire gets worse, you may not be able to get to a telephone.
- If you are in a fire, test doors before opening them. If the door is warm to the touch, don’t open it! Look for another exit.
- If you are trapped, help your client into a room with a window and close the door. Stuff clothing or linens under the door to block out the smoke. Next, break a window. Stay close to the bottom of the window since that’s where fresh air will come in. Wave a shirt or pillowcase outside so someone can see you.

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**PLAN ahead!**

- During a fire, smoke or flames may block your exit. It’s important to plan two escape routes from every client’s home—even if one of them is a window.
- Think about one of your current clients. Picture his or her home in your mind. What two ways could you get out of the house in case of a fire? Would you be able to get the client out by yourself? Write down your “fire escape” plan here:
DISASTER PLANNING

Every workplace is required by law to have an emergency preparedness plan. The emergency plan must cover a variety of emergencies. For health care organizations, this plan must teach you:

- How to know when the plan is being put into place.
- Who does what during an emergency.
- How to evacuate your clients' homes, if necessary.
- Where clients can go if their homes are destroyed.
- How to help clients during an emergency.

An emergency or disaster can happen at any time—day or night. Being prepared is your best defense. Here are some tips to help you become prepared:

- Consider all the potential emergencies that can occur including floods, fires, terrorism, winter storms, earthquakes, tropical storms, tornadoes, nuclear facility accidents, hazardous materials incidents and influenza pandemics.
- Be sure you know which types of natural disasters are common in your area so that you can be ready for them. For example, hurricanes usually strike slowly. You’ll probably have time to prepare yourself and your clients for this disaster.
- Tornadoes usually strike suddenly, with little warning. A tornado watch means that a tornado is possible and that you need to stay alert. A tornado warning means that a tornado has actually been sighted and that you need to protect yourself and your client immediately.
- Earthquakes can happen without warning, but floods can usually be predicted.
- It's important to know which of your clients have family or friends who will help them in a disaster—or if you are expected to stay with them in their home or in an emergency shelter.

- Your clients should be taught how to get a hold of you (and/or your workplace) during a disaster.
- Clients should also be encouraged to put together two disaster supply kits—one if they are confined to home because of a disaster and one if they are forced to leave home during an emergency. For more information about disaster kits, ask your supervisor for a copy of the Emergency Worksheet (that came with this inservice) or visit www.ready.gov.
- If you have a four-wheel drive vehicle, you may be asked to transport coworkers during an emergency.
- Your workplace may have a “telephone tree”. A coworker may call you to report that the disaster plan has been implemented. You might be expected to call the next person on the list.
- You probably learned about the emergency plan for your workplace during orientation. However, it’s a good idea to review the plan every year.

SPECIAL NEEDS SHELTERS

*In an emergency, would your clients qualify to stay at a “special needs” shelter? They may, if they:*

- Need electricity to operate medical equipment.
- Need help with medications, injections or simple dressing changes.
- Receive regular dialysis treatments.
- Are receiving hospice care.
- Have mild dementia—but do not wander or behave in an abusive or combative manner.

Some special needs shelters require that home health care workers stay with their clients at the shelter. Pets are usually not allowed at special needs shelters. However, by law, service animals (such as seeing-eye-dogs) must be allowed.