



Travis County Emergency Services District (ESD) No. 2

Pflugerville Fire Department

[www.PflugervilleFire.org](http://www.PflugervilleFire.org)

## What Every Senior Apartment Resident Needs to Know

**Because We Care**, Pflugerville Fire Department representatives meet with property managers and maintenance staff from every apartment complex in our area on a regular basis. We help prepare them for their fire inspection, and we encourage them to hold **YOU** to the highest standard in preventing fires! Here's what seniors need to know.



### Put It Out

#### Before You Throw it Out

If your property allows any smoking, you and your guests must safely discard your cigarettes, cigars and lighted matches. Do not flick them off of your balcony, out of your car window, or into grass, mulch, or flowerbeds. Never smoke in bed!

#### Medical Oxygen is a Fire Hazard

If you use medical oxygen, you face a higher risk of fires and burns because it is easier for a fire to start and spread with this extra oxygen. NEVER smoke in your apartment. Do not use a candle, lighter, match, or other open flame. Also avoid using any type of fireplace, and stay away from gas-powered stoves and appliances.

#### PASS the Fire Extinguisher

Your property manager should provide you with a working fire extinguisher either in your breezeway/hallway or inside your apartment. Before you pick it up, call 9-1-1! Be sure the fire is not between you and your only escape route. Never try to put out a large or growing fire. If you choose to use an extinguisher, remember to **P.A.S.S.:** Pull the pin. Aim low at the base of the fire. Squeeze the handle slowly and evenly. Sweep the nozzle side to side.

#### Stay with the Stove

Careless cooking is the leading cause of home fire deaths among older adults. Always stay in the kitchen while you cook, especially when cooking with

oil. Have you tried using a timer to remind you that you're cooking? Roll up your sleeves, and tie back robes or loose clothing. Keep everything away from your stove top that could catch fire such as oven mitts, paper towels/plates, cookbooks, and wooden utensils. If a pan of food catches fire, carefully slide a lid over it, turn off the burner, and let it cool.

#### Hear the Beep Where You

**Sleep** Did you know that having working smoke detectors inside your apartment decreases your chances of dying in a fire by 50% percent? NEVER remove or tamper with a smoke detector. Every bedroom in your building must be provided with a working smoke detector that is no more than 10 years old. One should also be provided outside of each bedroom within your apartment, and at least one on every floor of a multi-level apartment. If your detector makes a quick chirping sound, it's probably a dead battery and you need to get a new battery put in right away. Your building maintenance should test your detectors at least every 6 months! Consider enlisting a family member or caregiver to do monthly checks of your alarms.

#### Plan and Practice Your Escape

If there is a fire in your apartment, you have only a few minutes to get out! Prepare yourself by identifying TWO ways out of every room, in case one way is blocked by fire. Practice both

ways. Remove any boxes or debris from your exit paths. If you use a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to be sure you can go through the doorways. Hearing aids, eyeglasses and walkers should always be kept next to your bed while you are sleeping, along with a phone. Learn the locations of all stairwells, and never use elevators during a fire unless directed by firefighters.

Speak to your neighbors, family, and property manager about your escape plan. The Pflugerville Fire Dept. requires the managers for senior apartment facilities to have annual fire drills.

When the fire alarm sounds, get LOW and go UNDER any smoke if you are physically able to do so. Feel the door before you open it. If it's cool, get out and close the door behind you. But if it's hot, use another way out.

If smoke/fire in the building hallway is blocking you from safely escaping out your front door and you live on an upper floor, consider staying put inside your apartment until help arrives – especially if you have the benefit of a sprinkler system. (Portable fire ladders should only be used by able-bodied persons on the lower floors.) But be sure to call 9-1-1 to report your exact location; close all doors between you and the fire, go to a room with a window, and use towels or duct tape to create a seal around the door and over air vents to keep out smoke. Then wave a flashlight or light-colored cloth at the window to signal us where you are located.