

## January 2025



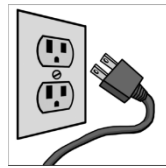
## New Year Safety Checks



### Increased Risk of Residential Fires During Winter

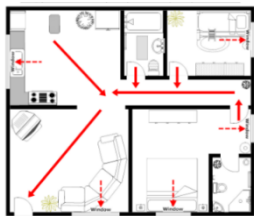
Half of all residential fires occur in winter (December, January and February). Home heating equipment (i.e., space heaters, etc.) accounts for 1 in every 6 fires and 1 in every 5 deaths.

Make sure nothing is placed within 3 feet of any space heater to reduce risk. Never plug more than one heat producing appliance into each electrical outlet (i.e., hair dryers, curling irons, toasters, coffee makers, space heaters, etc.) (2).



### Check All Smoke Alarms & Carbon Monoxide Detectors

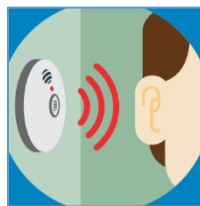
To reduce life threatening emergencies, caregivers and individuals should practice fire safety. In addition to actively reviewing and practicing fire evacuation plans it is important to check all batteries in smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors.



### Know The Alert Sound For Each Alarm

The National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) suggests everyone know the sound of each alarm when it goes off and know what actions they should take when the sound is heard.

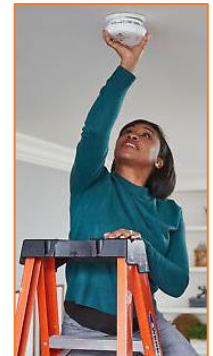
Homes with any gas-powered appliances should be equipped with **carbon monoxide (CO) detectors and smoke alarms**. CO is a deadly gas which cannot be seen or smelled.



### Know The Alert Sound For Weak Batteries

If short chirping sounds are heard every 30 to 60 seconds from either the smoke alarm or the CO detector this means the battery needs to be replaced.

If the battery has been replaced and the chirping sounds continue then it's time to replace the smoke alarm or CO detector. The NFPA recommends smoke alarms and CO detectors be replaced every 10 years.



### Stay Safe During Electrical Outages

During electrical outages, gas powered generators are often used. Generators should be placed **at least 20 feet away from a home** and should never be placed near a window, a basement entry, a cellar door opening, or any intake for your home's ventilation system, such as a heat pump.

Why? Carbon monoxide is sneaky and can easily find its way into the smallest crack around a window casing or under a door.

For example, if a gas-powered generator is placed near your heat pump intake, the CO can be easily sucked into the home's ventilation system (i.e., ductwork) and distributed throughout the whole house in a matter of minutes.



### Fire Safety Resources

You can download the National Fire Protection Agency's fire safety tip sheets and resources [here](#).

Please direct questions or concerns regarding the Office of Integrated Health Supports Network "Health Trends" newsletter to [communitynursing@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:communitynursing@dbhds.virginia.gov)

### App of the Month



**Smart 911** Free features include: Custom safety profiles shared with first responders, early emergency notifications, and enhanced emergency response for high-risk households. Smart911 allows users to create detailed safety profiles, including household information, medical needs, and fire risk factors, which are shared with 911 operators during an emergency call. This enhances the emergency response time and allows first responders to be better prepared when addressing fire or other hazards. (App of the Month is not endorsed by DBHDS Office of Integrated Health-Health Supports Network. User accepts full responsibility for utilization of app).



**Red Cross Emergency App** includes free features: Customizable emergency alerts, step-by-step disaster preparedness guides and interactive quizzes for safety education The Red Cross Emergency App provides customizable alerts for various emergencies, including house fires and wildfires. It offers preparation tips, as well as step-by-step guides on what to do before, during, and after an emergency. This app is excellent for both individuals and families who want to stay informed and prepared. (App of the Month is not endorsed by DBHDS Office of Integrated Health-Health Supports Network. User accepts full responsibility for utilization of app).

### Reference

1. Johnson-Arbor, K. K., Quental, A. S., & Li, D. (2014). A comparison of carbon monoxide exposures after snowstorms and power outages. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 46(5), 481-486.
2. Mahoney, S. (2022, February). Smoke alarm troubleshooting. *National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)*. 1-6.
3. *National Fire Protection Association (2024). Fire Safety Tips for Cold Weather.*

## January 2025



### ABA Snippets ...

#### New Year's Resolution Tips....

Happy New Year! A new year is an opportunity to make exciting changes in our lives. Many people make New Year's resolutions. We know some people will have success and some will give up on resolutions before February. Luckily, we can use behavior science to help move more people to success, or at least get past Valentine's Day. The following are some tips that can help you achieve your resolution or help support others in achieving theirs.

##### 1. *Make your resolution about a behavior.*

Merriam-Webster defines New Year's resolution as "a promise to do something differently in the new year." A resolution is a promise to change a behavior. One way to approach changing behavior is to use shaping. In his book *Other People's Habits*, Aubrey Daniels (1) defines shaping as "the positive reinforcement of successive approximations toward a goal" (p. 124). In other words, it is using reinforcement to make small changes that are closer to a goal. Check out the [ABA Snippets from August](#) and [September 2024](#) for more on shaping.

##### 2. *Set small achievable resolutions.*

"Think small to accomplish big" (1, p. 128). It is exciting to have big ambitions, and that excitement may be enough to keep us on track for a few weeks. When the excitement wears off and the goal seems far away, we tend to give up. "Goals should be set so that the probability of reaching them is high" (Daniels, 2007, p. 128). For example, Daniels (1) finds that when someone sets a goal to quit smoking they may try to go "cold turkey," which may work for a few days but often the person will start smoking again. On the other hand, working to reduce the number of cigarettes smoked per week is more achievable. The person is more likely to be successful each week and over time they can taper their smoking until they have quit.

##### 3. *Be generous with reinforcement.*

We feel successful when we achieve a goal. In some cases that feeling of success will function as reinforcement. "Success is usually reinforcing or as the saying goes, 'Success breeds success'" (1, p.128). In some cases, success alone may not be enough. Finding additional reinforcers can be helpful. Daniels continues, "You can never go wrong reinforcing improvement-no matter how small... Look at positive reinforcement as behavioral fuel. The more fuel you have, the longer you will be able to stay with a difficult task." Daniels (p.128).

These are just a few tips that can help you or someone you care about achieve meaningful, lasting success with a resolution in 2025.

You may contact DBHDS at: [brian.phelps@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:brian.phelps@dbhds.virginia.gov)

#### References

1. Daniels, A. C. (2007). *Other people's habits*. Performance Management Publications.
2. Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). America's most trusted dictionary. Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

### Wheelchair Safety and Maintenance Tips for Caregivers

Regular cleaning and maintenance can help promote the health and safety of the wheelchair user along with extend the life of the wheelchair. Developing a regular maintenance routine which involves cleaning, inspecting, and adjusting all critical components of a wheelchair and seating system is recommended annually. Usage, climate, environment and wheelchair type all dictate how often a wheelchair needs to be serviced and cleaned.

#### General Maintenance and Safety

- If the wheelchair has removable leg rests, footrests, arm rests or back rests, check them and make sure they can be removed and returned easily. If not, they may need to be repaired.
- If the wheelchair has a tilt feature, check to see if it reclines and returns upright without difficulty.
- Carefully check the axles, wheels, casters, and tires. Use a sharp tool or pick and carefully remove any hair, string or other debris that can interfere with the rotation of the wheels.
- Check each tire and make sure they are not deflated and that they have sufficient tread.
- Check the frame for any cracks or breaks in the metal, paying careful attention to areas that sustain significant stress, such as the cross-brace of a folding wheelchair and the areas where the wheels attach. Any potential problems need to be reported to your wheelchair dealer/vendor for repairs.
- Check the wheelchair locks/brakes. Make sure they release properly, without having to use excessive force. Make sure the brake/locks do not rub against the wheelchair tires.
- If it is a folding wheelchair, ensure it opens and folds easily. The folding mechanism requires a general lubricant like WD-40 at least once a year. If you live in a more humid, wet or salty climate near the coast the wheelchair may require more frequent lubrication to reduce the risk of rust.
- Ball bearings will need lubrication. Most manual wheelchairs have sealed bearings to discourage water and dirt from damaging them. Bearings require special care and should be serviced by a trained specialist.
- Check your wheel alignment monthly. If a chair tends to veer to one side, the wheels may be out of alignment.

Contact the MRE team at [mreteam@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:mreteam@dbhds.virginia.gov) for assistance with wheelchair checks, repairs and/or durable medical equipment (DME) safety issues.

### Does Your Staff Need to Learn More About a Specific Health & Safety Topic

The OIHSN RNCCs team can help. Send an email to the [communitynursing@dbhds.virginia.gov](mailto:communitynursing@dbhds.virginia.gov) requesting a personalized information session for your staff. Include your name, provider agency, region, and the topic your staff needs to learn more about. Training sessions can be done in person or virtually. Your regional RNCC will contact you to set-up a date and time. It's completely FREE.