



# VFW Post Insurance Program

## Loss Control Article

## Fire Safety - *Tips for Your Post*

The following safety tips, as printed in FIRE RISKS FOR OLDER ADULTS, published by the U.S. Fire Administration, can be used by your Post to enhance fire safety.

### **Identify the Nearest Emergency Exit -**

Be sure the emergency exits in your Post are clearly identified and members know their locations.

### **Heed Fire Safety and Design Guidelines -**

Walkways and doorways should accommodate any mobility impairment an individual may have. For example, doorways should accommodate a wheelchair's width, and flooring material should accommodate artificial limbs, walkers, or canes.

### **Install Smoke Alarms -**

The single most important step you can take is to install smoke alarms throughout the Post. A working smoke alarm can make a vital difference in the event of a fire and may reduce the risk of dying in a fire by as much as 60 percent. A properly functioning alarm can alert you and your members to the presence of deadly smoke while there is still time to escape. Keep smoke alarms clean by vacuuming or having them vacuumed regularly. Test batteries monthly, and replace them annually. If your smoke alarms are hardwired (connected to the electric circuitry of your residence), make sure they are also equipped with battery back-ups.

### **Wheelchairs Accessibility -**

To accommodate wheelchair users in public buildings, manual alarm pull stations should be mounted no higher than 48 inches (121 cm) from the floor. If manual alarms are mounted higher than 48 inches, these devices should be retrofitted with attachments that make them accessible to a wheelchair user.

### **Plan and Practice Escape Plans -**

Knowing your escape plan is one of the most important steps you can take to save lives in a fire. Plan your escape around the capabilities of your members and guests. There should be at least two exits from every room. Make sure all doors and windows can be unlocked and be sure you know how to open them. If security devices, such as bars, are installed across the windows, ensure that they release from the inside. Make any necessary accommodations (such as installation of exit ramps) to facilitate escape.

### **Involve the Fire Department -**

Ask the fire department to help you plan an escape route for your Post, and inform them of your special needs. Ask the fire department to help identify any fire hazards in your Post and explain how to correct them. Any areas you plan to use as a rescue area must be identified and agreed upon by you and officials from the fire department. Learn the fire department's limitations, and make fire officials aware of yours.