



*****For Immediate Release*****

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State Fire Marshal's Office
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Medical Oxygen Fire Safety for the Elderly

Olympia – According the United States Fire Administration, older adults have a 2.6 times greater risk of dying in a fire than the U.S. population as a whole. In the United States and Canada, adults age 65 and older make up about 12% of the population making it essential to take the necessary steps to stay safe. Last year there were 76 fire fatalities in Washington, and 22% were adults age 65 or older.

Many elderly adults are on medical required oxygen in their homes. If a fire is present, medical oxygen can cause material to ignite easier and make fires burn at a faster and hotter rate than normal.

Practice these safety rules where medical oxygen is in use:

- Never smoke where medical oxygen is being used.
- Post "No Smoking" and "No Open Flames" signs inside and outside of the home reminding residents and guests not to smoke.
- Keep oxygen cylinders at least five feet from a heat source, open flames, or electrical devices.
- Never use aerosol sprays containing combustible materials near the oxygen.
- Never use a candle, matches, sparking toy, a fireplace or stove, or any other device fueled by gas, kerosene, wood, or coal around medical oxygen or an oxygen tank in use.
- Body oil, hand lotion, and items containing oil and grease can easily ignite. Keep oil and grease away from where oxygen is being used.
- Make sure that homes have smoke alarms and test them monthly.
- If a fire starts in an oxygen-enriched space, the fire is likely to spread quickly igniting clothing, curtains, furniture, bedding, hair, and anything in the area.

For more information, contact the State Fire Marshal's Office at (360) 596-3929.

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The State Fire Marshal's Office is a Bureau of the Washington State Patrol, providing fire and life safety services to the citizens of Washington State including inspections of state licensed facilities, plan review of school construction projects, licensing of fire sprinkler contractors and pyrotechnic operators, training Washington States firefighters, and collecting emergency response data.