



Preventing falls and fires among older adults at home

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Issue Addressed:

Falls are the leading causes of death and injury among older adults in the U.S. Older adults are also more likely to die from home fires than younger people.

Activities:

More than one-third of older adults fall each year in the U.S., and many of these falls result in injury, loss of independence and a fear of falling. Older adults are also at risk for home fires due to mental impairments and mobility issues that reduce reaction times.

Working with local fire departments and hospitals, the Injury Prevention Research Center (IPRC) has led research to evaluate the effectiveness of falls and fire prevention programs to reduce serious fall injuries among older adults living at home.

1) The IPRC partnered with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to evaluate the program *Remembering When: A Fire and Fall Prevention Program for Older Adults*. Since 2007, the NFPA has trained more than 650 individuals to carry out this program. Outreach teams from local fire departments deliver 16 fire and fall prevention messages developed by national and local safety

experts. The teams convey the safety messages by visiting older adults in their homes or giving them a group presentation. IPRC researchers found that this program increased both fire and falls safety knowledge and behaviors of the older adults.

2) The IPRC currently partners with Mercy Clinics in Des Moines as one of 10 clinical trial sites in the U.S. to determine the effectiveness of the falls prevention intervention called *STRIDE: Strategies to reduce injuries and develop confidence in elders*. The study will compare falls over time of participants who receive current falls prevention education ("usual care") to those who receive the *STRIDE* intervention.

In *STRIDE*, a trained falls care manager (FCM) screens high-risk older adults and identifies their risks for falling, such as medical issues and hazards at home. The FCM works with the healthcare team, the older adults and the families to treat and mitigate these risks and provide older adults with exercise and rehabilitation.

Impact:

Because of IPRC's research and collaboration with the NFPA and local fire departments and hospitals, we are learning how falls and fire prevention programs and interventions

are helping older adults improve their safety knowledge and behaviors in this critical public health area.

Population:

Adults 65 years and older living at home

“There really isn't a very good mechanism to reach seniors, and I think this program does that.” -- Iowa fire fighter from the *Remembering When* program

“I really enjoyed the visit from the fireman. It really reminded us of some things that we need to do in the home.” -- Older adult participant of the *Remembering When* program