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9-1-1 Tips for Seniors

Today's Seniors are more healthy and active than ever before, but like everyone, they need to pay attention to health and safety risks. Americans over the age of 65 have a fire death rate nearly twice the national average. For those over 75, the rate jumps to three times the national average.

Sarasota County urges seniors to take steps to remain safe, whether they live independently or in a care facility:

- Invest in a touch-tone phone with large, easy-to-read numbers. Always make sure the phone is set to touch-tone dialing and not pulse dialing.
- Call 9-1-1 right away in an emergency.
- Dialing "0" will not always connect you with an operator nearby. It may connect you with an operator many hundreds of miles away. Always dial 9-1-1 for local police, fire or medical emergency assistance.
- Call 9-1-1 before calling a family member. Once help is on the way, arrangements can be made to notify your family.
- Stay on the line with the 9-1-1 call taker and answer all questions. The more information they have, the better able they are to help you.
- Try to be patient and stay calm. The call taker and emergency dispatchers may need to ask additional questions while help is on the way.
- The 9-1-1 system allows the call taker to "know" where you are calling from even if you cannot speak – for instance, if you are experiencing a stroke or if there is an intruder in your home. Just dial 9-1-1 and leave the phone off the hook. Do not hang up.
- Post your address by your telephone. If you have just moved you may have a new address, but you may recite your old address in an emergency situation. You may have visitors who are not familiar with your address. Giving the wrong address makes it difficult for the call taker to verify the address that appears on the computer screen.
- Emergency responders cannot help you if they cannot find you. Put your house number in large white numbers against a dark background outside your home so it can be seen from the road day or night.
- Any calls to 9-1-1 are free, even from pay phones or cell phones.
- 9-1-1 is a 24-hour-a-day service. Call immediately when an emergency occurs, even if it is in the middle of the night.
- Keep your medical history taped to the refrigerator in an envelope clearly marked with your doctor's phone numbers.

For more information or if you wish to have someone speak to a group on the proper use of 9-1-1, contact Sarasota County Public Safety Communications, 941-861-5000.

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