# Preventing Injuries with the Meals on Wheels Association of America

Fires and burns are among the leading causes of unintentional injury deaths in the United States, and the majority of them occur in homes. Among the people most at risk for fire-related injury and death are adults age 65 and older, the poorest Americans, and those residing in rural areas. Even at greater risk are older adults who are homebound due to health and other conditions. Smoke alarms decrease the chances of dying in a house fire by up to 50 percent. But one-quarter of U.S. households lack working smoke alarms, and the people least likely to have an alarm are often those at high risk of being injured in a fire.

To reduce fire-related injuries and loss of life and property, CDC partnered with the Meals on Wheels Association of America (MOWAA) to develop and implement the Residential Fire Homebound Elderly Lifeline Project (Fire H.E.L.P.). As the nation's oldest and largest organization representing senior nutrition programs, MOWAA has immense reach and access to over one million homebound individuals.

Fire H.E.L.P. consists of three major components:

- home screening for smoke alarms;
- education on fire risk factors and the importance of smoke alarms and escape planning;
- installation and periodic testing of free smoke alarms with long-life lithium batteries.

Meals On Wheels (MOW) programs have regular contact with homebound elderly clients through the home delivery of meals. Fire H.E.L.P. will use this opportunity to distribute smoke alarms to the older adults who need them in their homes. The alarms will be installed by local fire departments through partnership with the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). The project will also provide these men and women with the knowledge and skills needed to prevent fires before they start.

Through its partnership with MOWAA, CDC has gained greater access to a high-risk and hard-to-reach population. These vulnerable, homebound seniors are now receiving life-saving smoke alarms and fire prevention education. During this partnership's pilot in five Texas communities, approximately 5,000 smoke alarms will be installed, preventing injuries and saving lives.

This partnership increases knowledge and behavior change among the most vulnerable populations at risk for fire-related injury and death. If the pilot project is successful, MOWAA plans to expand Fire H.E.L.P. nationwide, potentially saving thousands of lives.

For more information about CDC at Work, please contact us at (202) 245-0600 or go to http://www.cdc.gov/washington/.

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