



For Immediate Release

Captain Neil Weaver
Government and Media Relations

State Fire Marshal's Office
State Fire Marshal Charles P. LeBlanc

Date: August 27, 2019

Contact: Deputy State Fire Marshal Alyson VanCleave

Phone: (360) 596-3929

Email: Fpbpio@wsp.wa.gov

Twitter: @WaFireMarshal

Hoarding Disorder and Fire Safety

Olympia – According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), between three and five percent of the population struggles with hoarding, a mental disorder characterized by an individual's inability to discard personal possessions. The large amount of possessions fills a home and prevents the normal use of the space. Excessive accumulation of material in homes poses a significant threat to firefighters responding to emergencies in these homes, as well as to residents and neighbors.

Hoarding increases the risk of fire ignition in a home because personal items may crowd cooking and heating equipment, causing them to catch fire. Occupants in these homes are at risk during a fire because blocked exits may prevent their escape or materials could fall on them. In addition, hoarding puts first responders at risk due to obstructed exits, falling objects, and excessive fire loading and it impedes their ability to search out and rescue people and pets.

If you know someone who struggles with hoarding disorder, there are several ways that you can help:

- When speaking with someone who hoards, match the language of the person and avoid using derogatory terms, such as “junk” or “trash.” Focus on safety issues and small steps for addressing those issues instead of immediate, overwhelming cleanup.
- Help the resident make a home safety and escape plan. Stress the importance of clear pathways and exits.
- Contact your local fire department to alert them of your concerns. They may be able to connect you with a hoarding task force for additional help.

For more information about fire prevention, visit the SFMO's website at www.wsp.wa.gov/state-fire-marshals-office/ or follow us on Twitter @wafiremarshal.

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.