

HOARDING AND FIRE RISK



Extreme clutter creates serious health risks, increases fire danger, and impacts quality of life. Help is available if you or someone you know has ongoing difficulty getting rid of possessions that are no longer useful.



Hoarding affects up to 6% of the population, including 19 million Americans.



**Orange County
Fire Authority**

(714) 573-6200
ocfa.org



Hoarding Fire Risk

- Cooking is unsafe in a cluttered kitchen if flammable items are too close to the stove or oven.
- Heaters are often too close to furniture, boxes, stacks of paper, or other items that can burn.
- Electrical wires often fray under the weight of stacks or piles.
- Open flames from smoking materials or candles can easily come into contact with excess clutter.
- Cramped living quarters result in narrow pathways and blocked exits.
- During a fire, stacks of belongings can easily fall over and entrap residents or firefighters.
- The weight of stored items, especially if water is added to put out a fire, can lead to a building collapse.
- Excess clutter can make searching for, rescuing, or providing medical care to residents difficult or even impossible in a hoarding home.

You Can Help

- Never ignore potential hoarding situations. Early intervention might save someone's life.
- When addressing hoarding, focus on risk prevention rather than clutter. Appeal to the resident's sense of safety and the well-being of family members, pets, neighbors, and first responders. Be caring and empathetic, not judgmental.
- Encourage the resident to start with small steps, such as installing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, clearing exit paths from each room, and creating a home escape plan.
- Discuss possible solutions and local resources, including the Orange County Task Force on Hoarding by visiting ochoardingtaskforce.org.