

Falls Matter

Pilot

01JAN2020 – 31MAR2020

- Falls-related EMS calls are the leading non-fire response related calls in Spokane County. Fire personnel in Spokane County were dispatched an average of 18 times per day to assist with a fall.
- Falls-related EMS calls are the second leading cause of EMS calls for SVFD, second to “Sick Person” calls. For the three years ending 2019, SVFD responded to over 5,500 fall calls, 65% of which were for older adults.
- Unintentional injury was the sixth leading cause of death among seniors in Spokane County in 2015. Of those, 74% were from fall-related injuries.
- The death rate from a fall among seniors (2011-2015) in Spokane County was 192.4 per 100,000, whereas the death rate for the whole of Washington State was 81.4 per 100,000.
- From 2011-2016, Washington State had the 14th-highest rate of fall-related deaths in the nation for adults age 65+, and the 5th highest rate of self-reported falls.
- One in three Washington residents over age 65 fall each year.
- Among seniors who died from a fall-related injury in Spokane County, 50% fell at home, 40% fell at a nursing home. A small proportion, 1.5%, fell in a public location. The remainder either fell at a worksite or at an unknown location.
- Among seniors who died from a fall-related injury, 49% had an associated femur fracture and 23% had a traumatic brain injury.
- Spokane County’s 65+ population is expected to grow 87% by 2025 (from 51,949 to 97,279).
- The best predictor for an increased risk of falls is a history of falls. Falling once doubles the chances of falling again.
- Older adult falls can be preventable. Interventions fall into one of three categories:
 1. Exercise / Physical Activity
 - Increase balance and mobility
 - Strong muscles and bones help older adults to move better
 - Exercise can increase balance, strength, and flexibility, and reduce risk of falls
 - Have vision checked by an eye doctor at least once a year
 - Poor vision is associated with an increased risk of falling
 - Use one pharmacy and have medications and supplements reviewed at least once a year
 - As individuals age, the way medications work in their body can change

- Some medicines, or combinations, can make older adults sleepy or dizzy, etc. and can cause a fall
- 2. Home Modifications
 - Make homes safer
 - Remove throw rugs and clutter
 - Install grab bars and non-slip mats
 - Put night lights along the path from the bedroom to bathroom
 - Wear footwear with a tread
 - Use appropriate assistive devices (i.e., canes, walkers, etc.)
- 3. Clinical Interventions.
 - Fall assessments with clinicians
 - Create a personal plan to reduce fall risks

- **Falls Matter Flyer Pilot**

- Developed with Spokane City Fire, Spokane County Regional Health Department (SRHD), and Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington (ALTCEW)
- Three month pilot, January – March 2020, VE7 and VM7
- Target patient: 60+ years old, living independently in residential setting, cognitively intact, and English as primary language
- Firefighters and emergency medical personnel are well-trusted information sources.
- Distribute and discuss *Falls Matter* flyer to patients and / or family members during “Lift Assist” and / or “Fall” incidents
- Have Falls Matter flyer available at Station 7 for public walk-ins
- Flyer side 1:
 - Recommendations on how to prevent falls
- Flyer side 2:
 - Resources available to patients:
 - Steady as We Go:
 - Offered through Spokane Regional Health Department
 - Older adult-oriented fitness classes
 - A Matter of Balance:
 - Offered through Aging and Long Term Care
 - Structure group intervention to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels
 - Washington Poison Control
 - Available to answer questions about managing multiple medications
 - Community Living Connections:
 - To learn about services and support options
- Data collection: count of flyers distributed, count of fall incidents, count of repeat-fall incident callers, and count of calls and website visits made to SRHD and ALTCEW
- Monthly review with VE7 and VM7 during pilot to discuss program changes, enhancements, progress, etc.