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

**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.

Orange County Fire Authority
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