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SPECIAL REPORT Sunday, November 2, 2014 10:07 AM EST

An Aging Nation Braces for More Deadly Falls

As the American population ages, the number of older people who fall and suffer serious, even fatal, injuries is soaring. So retirement communities, assisted living facilities and nursing homes where millions of older Americans live are trying to balance safety and their residents' desire to live as they choose.

They are hiring architects and interior designers, some of whom wear special glasses that show the building as an old person would see it. Some have begun to install floor lighting, much like that on airplanes, that automatically illuminates a pathway to the bathroom when a resident gets out of bed.

The number of people over 65 who died after a fall reached nearly 24,000 in 2012, almost double the number 10 years earlier, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More than 200,000 Americans over 65 died after falls in the decade from 2002 to 2012. Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death in that age group.

And more than 2.4 million people over 65 were treated in emergency departments for injuries from falls in 2012 alone, an increase of 50 percent over a decade.

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http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/11/03/health/bracing-for-the-falls-of-an-aging-nation.html?emc=edit_na_20141102

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