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Home Safety

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University

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Home Safety

Cooperative Extension Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture
South Dakota State University, Brookings

Three Main Causes of Accidents

- mistakes in planning and building,
- faulty or poorly designed equipment,
- unsafe habits and practices

Lack of knowledge and carelessness are the reasons these hazards exist.

Use this publication to check your home so you know your family can really be— **SAFE AT HOME**

FALLS

Falls account for about half of all home accident casualties plus a good many painful injuries. Only automobile accidents take a larger death toll!

To avoid falls:

Wear good fitting shoes with low heels for working. Rubber heels give the safest footing; leather or synthetic heels have a tendency to slide easily on wet surfaces.

Regularly check the condition of the floor and make repairs when needed. You can easily trip over loose tile, broken flooring material, and holes.

After washing your floor, be sure to rinse away all detergent. Detergent residue causes the floor to be slippery.

Wax floors with two very thin coats of wax and lots of polishing between coats and after the final coat. *Be sure to allow the wax enough drying time before you begin polishing.* Usually 1 hour of drying time is advisable although the floor may appear to be dry sooner. A shiny floor is safer than a dull floor.

Avoid using oily mops on waxed floors. Oil will be absorbed by unwaxed floors but will remain on top of waxed floors, causing very slippery conditions.

Provide nonskid backs for small rugs. You can buy special pads or sprays for this purpose or you can baste or tape pieces of foam rubber or rubber jar rings to the four corners of the wrong side of the rug.

Use a step stool or extension ladder in good condition to reach high places. *Do not use wobbly chairs, folding chairs, or boxes.*



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Keep the non-skid backings of any small rug clean by shaking, sweeping or vacuuming the backing often. About once a week sponge the backing clean with warm sudsy water. Rinse and dry. Dirt keeps the non-skid finish from gripping the floor.

Wipe up all spills right away. The smallest amount of liquid or food on the floor can cause a person to slip.

Avoid over-reaching when you are on a step stool or ladder.

Be sure a step stool or ladder is stable and securely placed on the floor or ground when you use it.

Be sure stairs are in good state of repair at all times ... no loose boards or loose treads.

Avoid having things stacked on steps ... for any reason.



Avoid carrying loads that are so large you are unable to see where you are walking.

Be sure stairways have handrails.

Be sure risers on stairs are of uniform height.

All stairways should be well lighted.

Keep furniture out of traffic lanes so walking is safe ... even in the dark.

BURNS AND SCALDS

Burns and scalds caused by steam and hot liquid frequently occur in the kitchen. Other burn accidents can happen as the result of fire.

To avoid burns and scalds:

Do not wear clothing with large pockets, full sleeves, loose ties, or ruffles, that might get caught and scorched or burned when you are cooking.

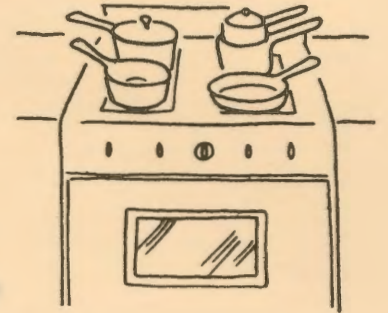
Never reach across an open flame.

Keep long hair tied back so it doesn't come in contact with a flame.

Be sure to keep your range surface, oven and toaster clean. Grease or crumbs can start a fire.

Smother any fire that starts at your range by using a tightly fitting lid or something that will cut off the air supply to the flame. *Never pour water on a fire at the kitchen range.*

Open pan lids carefully so steam escapes away from you.



Place pots and pans on the range so the pan handles don't extend over the edges of the range surface and so they are not over one of the burners where they could become overheated.

Use large, well-padded pot holders when handling hot pots and pans.

Be sure the pot holders you use are dry. A wet or damp pot holder against a hot pan can cause a steam burn.

Store matches in a tightly closed metal or glass container.

ELECTRICAL SHOCK

Electrical shock and faulty wiring can be avoided by using common sense and taking a few safety precautions. The fatality rate due to shock has gone down in recent years but some hazards still exist.

To avoid electrical accidents:

Never touch or use electrical appliances (including light switches) with wet hands or in damp, moist areas. Water and electricity are deadly companions.



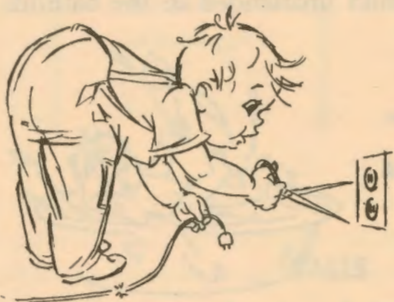
Use only cords in good repair. A worn or frayed cord can cause shock or a fire.

Keep appliance and lamp cords as short as possible. Wind and tie up extra cord with a rubber band.

Keep cords near to the wall to prevent people from tripping over them.

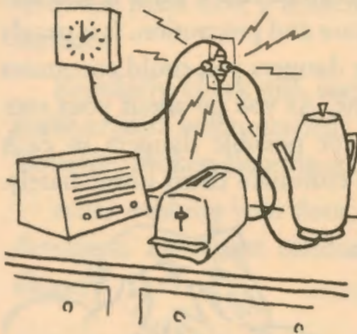
Never run cords under a rug as walking over the rug will cause the cord to become worn.

Never leave an electrical outlet uncovered where children or pets can reach it. Safety covers can be purchased at a very small cost.



Uncovered
electric outlets

Never plug in too many things at the same time. Use only one plug per outlet . . . otherwise you may overload the circuit. A wise rule is to use not more than one heating or two motor-driven appliances per circuit . . . never more than 1600 watts on one circuit.



If an extension cord is needed for an appliance, use only heavy-duty cords rated for 15 amps. Light-duty cords can be used for most lamps.

Turn off an appliance before plugging it in or disconnecting it from the electric outlet.

When disconnecting the power cord from anything remove the plug from the wall and then (if possible) the cordset from the appliance.

When connecting the power cord to any appliance or lamp, first place the cordset into the appliance and then into the outlet.

When disconnecting the power cord, always grasp the plug, *not the cord*, to pull with.

Never leave an iron plugged in if you are not working at the ironing board . . . if you must go answer the door, the phone, or to another room, *unplug the iron and put it out of reach of children or pets*. Never leave any appliance plugged in and unattended.

Purchase lights (such as Christmas tree lights), lamps, and appliances which bear the UL seal of approval on the cord and on the appliance. These may cost slightly more but they have been safety tested.

Flickering lights or an uneven sound in an electric motor are usually warnings that an electric circuit is overloaded.

If a circuit breaker trips or a fuse blows, find the trouble and correct it before resetting the breaker or replacing the fuse. Never use a penny in a fuse box as this might cause a fire.

Be sure each room and stairway is well lighted. Also read "Using Electricity Safely," ESS-11-E.

POISONING

Poisoning happens far too often in our homes. Many household cleaners and medicines are extremely dangerous if used incorrectly. Many of these products resemble food or beverages and can look very appealing to a child.

To avoid poisoning:

Leave *ALL* products in their original container. Don't store them in pop bottles or something similar. If necessary to store in a separate container, label it carefully and put the antidote on your labeling.

Be sure all products are clearly labeled and, in the case of medicines, see that they are also dated.

Read all labels carefully when you purchase the item and before each use so you don't misuse any product. Always keep the labels clean enough to read. Pour out of a side of the container so that the label will not be stained if spills occur.



In case of accident, the antidote for the poisonous product is printed on the container.

Store all medicines, cleaning products, and other poisonous products out of reach of children and pets. If possible put these things in a locked cabinet so young children can't climb up and get them.

Never take medicines in the dark or without carefully checking the label. Powerful medicines should be taped closed so they can't be opened in a hurry.

Never take medicine intended for another person without a doctor's okay. Be sure the person's name is on his or her medicine.

Never mix cleaning agents as poisonous fumes may result.

Use cleaning fluids, paint thinner, and similar products that emit fumes only in well-ventilated rooms or out of doors.

Discard unused drugs that are old, stale, or outdated by flushing them down the toilet or pouring them down the drain.

MISCELLANEOUS

Some other precautions will help you make your home a safer place to live:

Wear comfortable work clothes that enable you to move easily.

Keep your hair covered when doing dusty jobs.

Long hair should be carefully covered if you are washing clothes with a wringer-type washer.

Wear heavy cotton gloves for heavy work or work with sharp objects.

Keep all work surfaces clean and dry.

Dispose of broken glass, razor blades, aerosol cans, and other sharp or dangerous items carefully.

Dispose of paint rags, cleaning rags, and other rubbish.

Store work tools in a safe location.

Dispose of cracked or chipped enamelware.

Be sure guns, hunting equipment, and ammunition are in a safe (preferably locked) storage area. Never store the guns and ammunition in the same place.



Be sure all pots and pans have well-attached handles.

Keep knives, scissors, and other sharp objects in a special holder . . . not loose in a drawer.

Replace burned out light bulbs.

Have a flashlight with a good battery available in case of power failure.

Do not put foam rubber items into an automatic dryer.

Be sure pails of hot water or strong cleaning solution are not left unattended.

Never leave a child unattended in the bathtub.



Water

Provide toys which have a non-lead-base paint.

Provide a safe place for children to play while you are working.

When you stop and think about it, your home can be a dangerous place. It can be much safer if you and your family use a little care and precaution. It is nearly impossible to list all the dangers you could encounter as you live in your home. As you go about your routine work, keep alert for possible dangers in each room and take steps to eliminate them immediately.



Plastic bags

If you constantly think about the safe way of doing things, it will become a habit for you. If you are tired, depressed or ill, mistakes can occur rather easily. The most important thing you and your family can do is:

THINK SAFETY—SAFETY FIRST