

## **EDUCATIONAL: HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST**

Our homes are utilized for many different purposes. The usual need is fulfilled for shelter. Once that needs is met, then others arise. It is important for us to feel safe and protected in order to relax. Put strong dead bolt locks on front and back doors. Installing a burglar alarm system will help in some instances. A peephole for all outside doors is must. It is important that you can see who is at the door before you open it. Be sure it is installed at the proper height for you. The most effective peepholes allow you to see a range of 180 degrees from side to side. Home should always be a place where we can be safe from the elements, outsiders and most of all, the home itself.

Home accidents are a major source of injuries and can cause death.. A simple fall that results in a broken bone can become a serious, disabling injury that limits one's independence. As we age, our senses of sight, touch, hearing, and smell tend to decline. Our physical abilities are reduced, and certain tasks such as stretching, lifting, and bending become more difficult. In addition, we also experience a slowing of judgment and reaction time. As a result, we cannot respond as quickly. These normal changes make us more prone to accidents. Simple precautions and adjustments can help ensure a safe, accident-free home.

A checklist has been included. Please make copies and use this list as you go through your home. Make a check mark next to those items or behaviors that you already have. (Some of the items may be repeated. That is to ensure that item is completed in that particular room. If there are items that you do not check, then your home is not as safe as it could be. By improving those items not marked, you can make your home a safer and more comfortable place to live.

### **All Areas of the Home**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency numbers and your address are posted by each telephone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Telephones are located in each room. They can be reached from the floor in case of a fall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inside and outside door handles and locks are easy to operate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Doors have lever-action handles instead of round knobs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Door thresholds are low and beveled or there are no thresholds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Windows open easily from the inside, but they have a secure locking system that can prevent someone from entering from the outside.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hot water heater is set to "Low" or 120 degrees or lower to prevent accidental scalding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Carpeting and rugs are not worn or torn.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Small, loose rugs have non-skid backing and are not placed in traffic areas of the home.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Appliances, lamps, and cords are clean and in good condition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There are no exposed, glaring bulbs in lamps or fixtures.

- \_\_\_\_\_ All electrical equipment bears the Underwriters laboratories (UL) label.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Outlets are located where they are needed in every room.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Electrical overload protection is provided by circuit breakers, fuses, or ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI). GFCIs prevent electrical shock and are particularly important in areas where water is used, such as kitchens, bathrooms, and outside.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Electrical service has enough capacity to serve the house and is up to code. (You can call your municipal electrical inspector or a reputable electrical contractor to check the wiring in your house.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Extension cords do not carry more than their proper load as indicated on the cord or appliance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Electrical cords are placed out of the flow of traffic and out from underneath rugs and furniture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Smoke alarms are present in the home and are in working order. One way to help you remember to change the batteries is to replace them on your birthday—don't forget to mark it on your calendar.

### **In the Kitchen**

- \_\_\_\_\_ The range and sink areas have adequate light levels.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you have a gas range, it is equipped with pilot lights and an automatic cut-off in the event of flame failure. (Your local utility service representative can check this for you.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ The range is not where curtains might fall onto a burner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you have an exhaust hood for the oven, it has easily removable filters for proper cleaning. Clean filters as needed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The kitchen exhaust system is internally vented, discharges directly outside, or discharges through ducts to the outside and not into the attic or other unused space.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The ventilation system or range exhaust is in use while you are cooking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Countertop space lets you keep carrying and lifting to a minimum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Kitchen wall cabinets are not too high to be easily reached.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lighting of counter tops is enough for meal preparation. (Especially where food is sliced or cut.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Light switches are located near the doors
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shiny or glaring work surfaces are not used.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Oven controls are clearly marked and easily grasped.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Oven controls are located on the front or side of the oven, so that you don't have to reach over the burners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A single-lever mixing faucet is used. This type of faucet controls both the hot and cold water flow with a single control.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flooring is not slippery and has a non-glare surface.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When cooking, pan handles are turned away from other burners and the edge of the range.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When cooking, you do not wear garments with long, loose sleeves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hot pads and pan holders are kept near the range.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you have a microwave, it is operated only when there is food in it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Small appliances are unplugged when not in use.
- \_\_\_\_\_ All extension cords and appliance cords are located away from the sink or range.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Knives are kept in a knife rack or drawer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Countertops and work areas are cleared of all unnecessary objects.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Drawers and cupboards are kept closed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A sturdy, stable stepladder or step stool is used rather than a chair to reach objects in overhead cabinets. Tighten screws and braces
- \_\_\_\_\_ Grease or liquid spills are wiped up at once.

### **In the Living Room/Family Room**

Check all rugs and runners, electrical and telephone cords, lighting, the fireplace and chimney, the telephone area, and all passageways.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Chimneys are clear from accumulations of leaves and other debris.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has the chimney been cleaned within the last year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Passageways in heavy traffic areas are well lit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Passageways are free from clutter, obstructions or tripping hazards.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Electrical cords are placed along walls (not under rugs) and away from traffic areas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Chairs and sofas are sturdy and secure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Chairs and sofas are not too low or too deep to get in and out of easily.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Chairs and sofas have full arms to aid in sitting or rising.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The light switch is located near the entrance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Furniture, which might be used for support when walking or rising, is steady and does not tilt.

### **Bathroom**

In the bathroom, check bathtub and shower areas, water temperature, rugs and mats, lighting, small electrical appliances, and storage areas for medications.

- \_\_\_\_\_ The bathtub or shower has a non-skid mat or strips on the standing area.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bathtub or shower doors are safety glass or plastic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Grab bars are installed on the walls by the bathtub and toilet by someone who is qualified.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The towel bars and the soap dish in the shower stall are durable and are firmly installed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A single-lever mixing faucet is used, or you have faucet handles that are easy to grasp.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bathroom flooring is matte-finished, textured tile, or low pile commercial carpet (no throw rugs or bathmats).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bathroom has even lighting without glare. The light switch is near the door.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The bathroom door opens outward.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The bathroom has a safe supplemental heat source and ventilation system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The outlets are ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) that protect against electric shock.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Light switch is near the entrance of the bathroom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Small electrical appliances such as hair dryers, shavers, curling irons, etc., are unplugged when not in use.

### **Check Medications**

\_\_\_\_\_ All medicines are stored in the containers that they came in and are clearly marked.

## **Bedrooms**

In the bedroom, check all rugs and runners, electrical and telephone cords, and areas around beds.

- \_\_\_\_\_ There is a telephone close to your bed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The bathroom has a safe supplemental heat source and ventilation system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The outlets are ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) that protect against electric shock
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lamps or light switches are within reach of each bed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ashtrays, smoking materials, or other sources of heat or flame are located away from bedding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There is nothing covering your electric blanket (i.e. other blankets, pets, etc) while in use.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The sides of the electric blanket are not tucked in.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You do not fall asleep with the heating pad on.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A lamp or flashlight is kept within reach of your bed. Check batteries periodically to make sure they are working, and keep a spare package of batteries nearby.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plenty of room is left for you to walk around the bed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You have an adequate-sized nightstand or small table for the telephone, glasses, or other important items.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There is a sturdy chair with arms where you can sit to dress.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You have wall-to-wall low pile carpeting or a smooth surface floor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your bedroom is located on the first floor of the home.

## **Basement/Garage/Workshop/Storage Areas**

In the basement, garage, workshop, and storage areas, check lighting; fuse boxes or circuit breakers, appliances and power tools, electrical cords, and flammable liquids.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Work areas, especially where power tools are used, are well lit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Light switch located near the doorway.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pathways are kept clear of tripping hazards.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fuse box is checked to be sure the fuses being used are the correct size.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Power tools are equipped with a 3-prong plug or are marked to show that they are double insulated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Guards are in place for the power tools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The grounding pin is intact on the 3 prong plug and the adapter is being used properly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Containers of volatile liquids are tightly capped.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gasoline, paints, solvents, & other products that give off vapors or fumes are stored away from ignition sources.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fuse box is checked to be sure the fuses being used are the correct size.
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## **In Stairways and Hallways**

For all stairways and hallways, check lighting, handrails, and the condition of the steps and coverings.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Stairs are lit so that each step and the edges can be clearly seen going up and down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The bulbs used are the right type and wattage for the light fixture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ An operating flash light is in a convenient location at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Steps are the same size and height..
- \_\_\_\_\_ The coverings on the steps are in good condition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The edges of the steps can be seen clearly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ All objects are removed from stairways and hallways.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Steps are in good condition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Steps have non-skid strips. Carpeting on steps is securely fastened and free of fraying or holes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Smoke detectors are in place in hallways and near sleeping areas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hallways are equipped with night-lights.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sturdy handrails are on both sides of stairway and are securely fastened.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Light switches are located at the top and bottom of stairways and at both ends of long hallways.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inside doors do not swing out over stair steps.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There is enough space in the stairway to avoid bumping your head.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Room entrances do not have raised door thresholds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is easy to see the leading edge or nosing of each stair tread while walking down stairs

## **Outdoor Area**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Steps and walkways are in good condition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Handrails are sturdy and securely fastened.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Doorways, steps, porches, and walkways have good lighting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Porches, balconies, terraces, window wells, and other heights or depressions are protected by railings, closed with banisters, closed with fences, closed with accordion gates, or are otherwise protected.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hedges, trees, or shrubs do not hide the view of the street.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Garage doors are easy for you to operate, even when snow is piled against them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The garage is adequately ventilated.

**\*\*\* REMEMBER TO PERIODICALLY RE-CHECK YOUR HOME!**

If you find that your home does need changes in order to make it safe, you may want to hire a home repair contractor or handyman. It is important to select a reputable contractor. Here are a few guidelines to help protect you:

1. Ask friends to recommend repair contractors.
2. Get at least three written estimates for the project. Most contractors give free estimates.
3. Ask for and check references.
4. If licensing is required in your area, ask to see the contractor's license. Also ask for proof of insurance and bonding.
5. Do not pay the contractor in full before the work is done. Some contractors will ask for a small down payment, which is permissible.
6. Get a signed written agreement before work begins or money is exchanged. The agreement should specify both work and payment schedules. It should also detail the type of work to be completed.
7. Do not make final payments on the project until the work has been performed to your satisfaction.
8. Check with the Better Business Bureau or the attorney general's office if you have questions or complaints about a contractor.

Please use this checklist for yourself or your loved ones. I know it is lengthy but the little time we take now could save us an abundance of heartache and pain later. For more information you can contact your local Agency for the Aging. Please, BE SAFE!

*Joyce Gibson*  
*Oklahoma State Council 2010-2011*  
*2nd Vice President/Educational Chairman*

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