

## Now's the Time.

12,000 people or more are going to visit the emergency room this holiday season thanks to hidden dangers around the house. With the upcoming festivities at hand, now is the perfect time to survey your home and address potential safety hazards. Here are 12 tips to make sure you spend the holidays safe at home with family and friends... and out of a cold and crowded ER.

# TOP 12 TIPS FOR A SAFER HOLIDAY HOME

## The Top 12 Safety Tips

**1. GOOD LIGHTING**— Adequate lighting reduces the risk of tripping and falling both inside and outside your home. This is especially important in winters when days are shorter. Critical areas that need to be illuminated are the stairs, outdoors, and foyers. Make sure your street number is well lit and visible from the street to aid first responders find your home. **The fix:** Make sure adequate wattage is utilized and long-life bulbs and motion detectors are in place.

**2. ELECTRICAL PROBLEMS?**— Electrical issues, like a flickering light or a dead outlet, can be mild annoyances that actually signal serious dangers. If not addressed promptly, a faulty electrical system can result in house fires and shocks. **The fix:** If you're experiencing any problems with your electricity, contact a professional right away. In your daily life, make sure electrical cords are not frayed or pierced and extension cords are securely connected. Do not run too many cords to a single outlet. Unplug small appliances, space heaters, and power tools when not in use.

**3. DO ROUTINE CLEANING**— Not maintaining your appliances leads to a greater chance of accidental home fires. **The fix:** Do simple tasks regularly like cleaning grease off your stovetop, emptying the lint trap on your dryer, and keeping your chimney clean and clear.

#### 4. SMOKE & GAS DETECTORS—

Every home needs functional warning devices that detect smoke and gases. **The fix:** When purchasing smoke alarms, make sure they also detect carbon monoxide, a deadly gas that is especially dangerous because it is colorless and odorless. Replace the batteries every six months—or whenever you change your clocks. Create an emergency evacuation plan, build a preparedness kit, and practice regular safety drills with your family to ensure awareness of procedures.

#### 5. SECURE YOUR HOME—

Many homes now have the latest technological advancements but still rely on locks and hardware from decades ago to keep you safe from intruders. **The fix:** Do an audit of all entry points to your home—doors and windows and screens. If any do not have secure screens, locks, and deadbolts, have them installed. For those entry points that do already have door knobs, handles, and locks, make sure that they are in good working condition.

#### 6. WHEN YOU'RE AWAY—

We all enjoy long weekends and out-of-town vacations, but unfortunately that leaves your home vulnerable to intruders. **The fix:** Create the illusion that someone may still be there. Leave a TV or stereo on in the room where a burglar would most likely break in. Have neighbor pick up

mail and the daily paper. Turn down phone ringers, keep blinds drawn, and don't leave unsecured valuables in the home even if you think they are well-hidden. Never hide keys around the home or garden, and don't leave notes on the door that suggest you are out of town.

#### 7. HOUSEHOLD REPAIRS—

Even if you are an expert and know your way around electrical, plumbing, car or other household repairs, proceed with caution. A poor repair could be a recipe for disaster. **The fix:** Call a professional or ask us for a referral from our trusted sources.

#### 8. VEHICLE CAUTION—

Remember that there is danger even before you drive on the street. If you are backing your car up, watch out for children and pets on the sidewalk and road. **The fix:** Be cautious and proceed slowly when driving vehicles in or out of your driveway. If your driveway does not have good visibility in both directions, walk down and look in both directions before you get in your car.

#### 9. MAKE IT SAFE FOR VISITORS—

If you are hosting friends and family, consider what additional safety challenges they may face. **The fix:** Put yourself in the shoes of a small child and look for low, hard edges, sharp objects, easy-to-open cabinets with chemicals and cleaning agents. Look for falling and tripping hazards that may fell seniors.

#### 10. BRACE YOURSELF—

Heavy objects are rarely braced in the home. Appliances, artwork, TVs, and aquariums present real hazards if they are knocked down by a person or a natural disaster. **The fix:** Strap and brace heavy objects and use security hardware for large artwork.

#### 11. UNCOVER HIDDEN DANGERS—

If your home was built before the late seventies, there's likely lead in the paint under the top coats on your walls and windows, and there might be traces in the varnish used on many hardwood floors. In addition, asbestos often can be found in insulation and "popcorn" ceiling textures. **The fix:** Hire a licensed contractor to test for possible contaminants and remove them safely, especially prior to a remodel.

#### 12. MOTHER NATURE—

Your homeowners insurance will cover you in many instances, but did you know that you may not be insured against natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes? They typically require an additional policy. **The fix:** Contact your insurance agent to make sure you have adequate replacement coverage as home values escalate and coverage amounts can stay static. Discuss adding disaster policies for the natural disaster most likely to hit your area. Finally, having a disaster and communication plan can minimize the risks.

### MORE SAFETY DANGERS TO KIDS THAT YOU MAY NOT THINK ABOUT

**TOXINS—**Curious kids can explore low cabinets and ingest toxic chemicals. **The fix:** Put baby locks on all lower cabinets. Keep children away from your garage and sheds.

**OPEN WATER—**Did you know that as little as an inch of water can be a major hazard? **The fix:** Watch for open ice chests and standing water, and don't leave toilet seats open.

**WINDOWS AND STAIRS—**Over 5,000 kids a year suffer from falls. **The fix:** Install window guards or window stops. Use baby gates at stair entries. Steps should always have firm footing and be clear of any objects.

**FAMILY PETS—**Children are very attracted to cats and dogs. However, cats often have sharp claws and

dogs can bite and knock kids down. **The fix:** Monitor play activity and make sure your pet is not getting anxious or annoyed.

**CORDS—**Loose cords can get twisted around a baby. **The fix:** Excessive cords of all types should be removed or secured down. Always keep cribs away from windows with loose cords.

If you would like our advice on how to make your home safer and need a list of trusted sources for home repairs, please contact us today. It's our business to ensure that your home is safe and secure for your family.



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