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Top Tips for Home Safety

Being safe truly is better than being sorry. There are a variety of products that can maintain a level of safety around the home that will help everyone sleep more soundly.

A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives. Because fire grows and spreads rapidly, however, the number one priority is for all family members to get out safely. It is important for all family members in a home to have a fire escape plan with at least two exits from each room. Designate an outdoor meeting place and practice the fire drill twice each year.



A portable fire extinguisher can be used safely when a fire is confined to a small area, when everyone else has left the home, the fire is not growing and the room is not filled with smoke. To properly use a fire extinguisher, remember the word "PASS." It reminds homeowners to: **P**ull the pin, holding the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away and releasing the locking mechanism. Next, **A**im low, pointing at the base of the fire. Then, **S**queeze the lever slowly and evenly. Finally, **S**weep the nozzle from side to side.

Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of the home, outside sleeping areas, and inside all bedrooms. Smoke alarms powered by electricity should have a battery backup. Test alarms monthly and for additional information, visit The United States Fire Administration's website at www.usfa.dhs.gov/smokealarms.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a deadly, colorless, odorless, poisonous gas produced by the incomplete burning of fuels such as coal, wood, charcoal, oil, kerosene, propane, and natural gas.



Products and equipment powered by internal combustion engines such as portable generators, cars, lawn mowers, and power washers also produce CO. These engines should never be operated inside a home or a closed garage. A carbon monoxide detector can provide additional safety by alerting residents to the dangers of this gas before they become incapacitated.

A CO alarm should meet Underwriters Laboratory (UL) safety standards and should be installed on every level of the home, and in the hallway near every separate sleeping area of the home.

Ground-fault circuit interrupters save lives by monitoring the level of electricity flowing into a circuit. These electronic devices monitor the electricity flowing in a circuit by detecting the difference between incoming and outgoing current. These levels should be equal. In case of an overload, the GFCI cuts power. This shut-off feature can interrupt a potentially lethal dose of electricity from being delivered to anyone in its path. GFCI-protected outlets are required in kitchens, baths and garages and sometimes in other areas, depending on local building codes.

If the need should arise to shut off gas, water or electricity to a home in the case of emergency, the shut-off valves should be tagged or labeled so they can be quickly identified and accessed. The main shut off valve for water lines is usually located in a basement or garage, or it can be located outside. It is a larger pipe with a handle or valve affixed to it. By turning the handle or valve, the water source will be shut down. In case of a gas leak, the gas line needs to be shut down. The main shut off is usually located near the gas meter.



In homes with children, child-proofing cabinets, stairs, and pools can protect against falls as well as accidental ingestion of hazardous substances. Plastic safety caps on electrical outlets will prevent fingers or foreign objects from being inserted into outlets.

In homes with older residents, rugs, mats and other surfaces should be nonskid. Stairways should be equipped with sturdy handrails that extend the full length of the stairs, and grab bars should be installed in bathrooms. Install slip-resistant surfaces in the shower or bathtub.