



The Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches

Home Safety

The home can be the most dangerous place for accidents. Everyday more than 500 people aged 65+ will have a serious fall at home and need hospital treatment. However, most accidents are preventable. Below is some advice on how you can make your home a safer place.

The advice comes from the partners in the Fife Cares agency, part of Fife Council's Community Safety Partnership

General Safety

- Do not leave your door keys in locks.
- Keep your door keys where you will find them.
- Do not leave your door chain on overnight.
- You should have at least one smoke alarm that is working properly.
- Your gas appliances should be checked and serviced regularly.

Living and Dining Room

- Make sure there are no damaged or trailing flexes in plugs.
- Do not to overload electric sockets.
- Make sure plugs are in the socket properly.
- Do not sit too close to your fire.

Hall and Stairs

- Keep your hall and stairs well-lit and free from clutter.

Bedroom

- Never smoke in bed.
- Replace electric blankets if they are older than 10 years or in poor condition.
- Always switch off your electric blanket before you go to bed.

Bathroom

- Use a non-slip bath mat.
- Fill your bath with cold water before the hot.

Here are some basic steps you can take to make you feel safer and more secure in your home.

Locking Up

- Keep your keys in a safe place.
- Close your blinds and curtains at night.
- If you are going out at night leave a light on or use a security timer.

Doors

- Always use a door chain and door viewer when answering the door.
- Keep all external doors closed and locked at all times, with key removed, to prevent sneak-in theft.

Home Security

Windows

- Keep all windows locked when you are out.
- Consider fitting effective window locks.

Timer Switches

- Security timers are one of the most effective ways of protecting your home.
- By simply plugging household appliances such as radios or lamps into a timer, you can give the illusion that someone is at home.

Property Marking

- An Ultra-Violet pen can put an invisible mark, such as your postcode and house number, on your property.
- Remember the invisible mark can fade, so renew regularly.

These are the general safety tips - see also the special advice on Fire safety, Bogus Callers etc.

Falls in The Home

Our more senior members of society are the ones who suffer most from falls. Usually in or around the home.

Often resulting in broken bones and/or hospitalisation.

These notes are designed primarily for the older generation but could equally apply to all of us.

By following these simple steps you can help reduce your chances of falling:

- Try to keep active.
- Regular exercise can improve your strength, balance and your coordination.
- Take care of your feet. Wear low-heeled shoes with a good grip and throw away old pairs with the sole worn away.
- If your medicines are making you feel dizzy, keep taking them but tell your doctor.
- Always take your time getting up from bed or out of your chair.
- Keep some rock salt handy to put on your paths when the weather is cold and icy.
- Make sure you have bright lights in your house, especially on your stairs.
- Always put on the light if you get up during the night.
- Keep the floor free of clutter and never leave anything lying around on your stairs or beside your bed.
- Fit handrails on both sides of the stairs.
- Don't leave worn rugs or carpets on your floor.
- If you can, nail or tape down the edge of rugs.
- Fit a handrail near the bath and toilet.
- Put a non-slip mat in the bath.
- Try to remember to wipe up all spills straight away.
- Keep things that you use often in easy reach.
- Try not to bend down too much. Get a basket fitted onto your door to catch your mail.
- Try not to stand on a wobbly chair or steps to reach something.

- Don't rush to answer the telephone.
- Get an answer machine and an extra phone extension fitted upstairs.

Unfortunately we all are still likely to fall over at some time and we have included the following guidelines for such a situation.

What to do if you have a fall....

If you do fall...

- Do not panic. Stay still for a few minutes and try to calm down.
- If you are hurt or feel unable to get up follow the REST and WAIT plan below:

REST and WAIT Plan:

- Call for help if you can.
- Use your community alarm if you have one.
- Bang on the wall.
- Crawl to your telephone.
- Move to a soft surface.
- Keep warm.
- Try to get something to cover yourself and try to move away from any drafts or open windows.

Remember to keep something in every room that you could use just in case you do fall.

- Keep moving.
- Try not to stay in one position for a long time. If you can, roll from side to side and move your arms and legs.

Falls in the Home

Always make sure you are not hurt before you try to get up.

The "***Up and About Plan***" is just one way which might help you get up.

It would be a good idea to ask your GP or local physiotherapist for advice on what would be the best way for you to get up.

The Up and About Plan:

1. Roll onto hands and knees and crawl to a stable piece of furniture such as bed, stool or chair.
2. With hands on the support, place one foot flat on the floor bending your knee in front of your tummy.
3. Lean forwards, push on your feet and hands until you bring the other foot to be beside the first.
4. Turn and sit on the seat. Rest for a while before getting up.

We hope that the above messages will be passed on through neighbourhood watches and all others visiting our site. Some of these simple safety precautions could save our older members from injury or even a fatality.

Fire Action Plan

Plan your escape **NOW**

A fire can develop and spread in a house very quickly. Therefore it is essential for you to plan what actions everyone should take to escape if a fire starts.

Make sure everyone in your house understands the action plan and knows what to do in the event of a fire.

10 Key Points

- 1 **PLAN** your escape route now
- 2 **PRACTICE** your escape route
- 3 You only have seconds - **DON'T STOP** for valuables
- 4 **SHOUT** to alert everyone in your house
- 5 **KEEP LOW** if the house is full of smoke. Remember, the air is clearer and

cooler near the floor

6 **DON'T INVESTIGATE** - keep doors closed

7 If there's no way out, get everyone into a **SAFE ROOM**

8 Never jump straight out of a window. **LOWER** yourself onto cushions, etc

9 If necessary **BREAK** a window and make safe all jagged edges

10 **WHEN YOU'RE OUT - STAY OUT and DIAL 999**

Keep all your doors closed, especially at night

Smoke Alarms

A smoke alarm can save your life

A smoke alarm gives you early warning of a fire. This gives you time to put your fire plan into action and get to safety.

Checking Your Smoke Alarm

- If you can, it is best to fit a hardwired or ten year battery smoke alarm.
- You should have at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home.
- Make sure your smoke alarm is fitted at the highest point possible in the room.
- Test your smoke alarm once a week by pressing the test button. This can be done by using a broom handle or a garden cane. Do not stand on a chair or ladder to do this.

Gas Safety

This fact sheet suggests some basic steps you can follow to make sure your gas appliances are as safe as possible.

- Always use a CORGI registered Gas Engineer for gas fitting and servicing work.
- Have all your gas appliances checked and serviced by a CORGI gas engineer at least once every year.
- Never modify a gas appliance or its settings from those specified by the manufacturer as this can cause serious problems.

Some aspects of gas safety are covered under the law.

Here is some information on the law and your responsibilities:

• ***Anyone carrying out work on gas appliances or fittings as part of their business must be registered with CORGI.***

- You should always check that your engineer is registered. You can do this by asking to see their current CORGI photo ID card.
- This ID card should include the engineer's registration number, their trading title and the expiry date of the card. The kind of work an engineer is allowed to do is listed on the back of their ID card.
- For more information about CORGI, you can call CORGI during office hours on 01256 372300 or log onto the CORGI website at

www.corgi-gas.com

For more information about the law and gas safety - phone the **Health & Safety Executive Gas Safety Advice Line on**

Freephone 0800 300 363 or visit the website at www.corgi-gas.com

Transco Gas Emergency FREEPHONE number 0800 111 999

To make sure you are using your gas appliances as safely as possible, follow these simple steps:

- Never cover an appliance or block the air vents.
- Never block or obstruct any fixed ventilation grilles or airbricks.

- Never block or cover outside flues.

If you notice any of these danger signs, you should stop using the appliance immediately:

- Staining, soot or change in colour of the appliance or surrounding areas.
- A gas heater or boiler burning with a yellow or orange flame rather than its normal blue flame.
- A smell of gas.

What should you do if you smell gas?

¥ No naked flames - do not smoke or use matches.

¥ Do not touch electrical switches - turning a light on or off can ignite escaping gas.

¥ Open windows and doors - this will help to get rid of the gas.

¥ Turn off gas - check in case any gas has accidentally been left on unlit or the pilot has gone out. Then turn off the gas meter.

(Make sure you know where the lever is). Then get out and stay out until help arrives.

- From a neighbour's phone or from a mobile phone outside - call Transco Gas **Emergency FREEPHONE number 0800 111 999.**

You can call this number 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Carbon Monoxide

Every year many people are made ill - *and some even die* - from carbon monoxide poisoning. This fact sheet explains what carbon monoxide is and gives advice on how to use appliances safely.

What is Carbon Monoxide?

- Carbon monoxide is an odourless and invisible gas.
- Gas or oil appliances, such as faulty radiators, clothes dryers, heaters and blocked flues or chimneys, can produce it.
- Because it doesn't have any smell and you can't see it, it is difficult to know if you have a carbon monoxide leak - but there are symptoms you can look out for.
- Poisoning can occur very quickly so if you or anyone else in your house is suffering from any of these symptoms make sure you see a doctor:

Tiredness, chest pains, drowsiness, headaches, dizziness.

You can also spot a carbon monoxide leak by looking at your gas appliances or fires.

Look out for:

- A flame - normally blue- appearing yellow or orange;
- Stains of soot;
- Coal or wood fires not burning well or going out;
- Smoke coming into the room;

If you suspect carbon monoxide leakage **IMMEDIATELY:**

- Open all doors and windows
- Shut off the gas supply at the meter control valve
- **Call the Transco Emergency telephone number 0800 111 999**

By following these simple steps you can help prevent and detect carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Have all your appliances, including boilers or heating systems, checked and serviced at least once a year.
- **Install a carbon monoxide detector alarm near to where you sleep.**
- Always check that your carbon monoxide detector complies with British Standard BS 7860.

- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Have your chimney swept every year - even if you burn 'smokeless' fuel.
- Make sure that any heater using fossil fuel has proper ventilation. (The person servicing the heater or sweeping the chimney can advise you).

Check all gas appliances for safety, especially in rooms fitted with draught excluders or double-glazing and conservatories.

- If you suspect an appliance fuelled by coal, smokeless fuels, wood or oil is not working properly, get it checked by a qualified engineer.
- If you think a gas appliance is not working correctly, or if ventilation is poor, get it checked by a CORGI registered engineer. **For your nearest CORGI engineer, call 01256 372300** (Make sure you have your post code at hand before you 'phone.)
- When using gas cylinders and paraffin heaters always follow the instructions.

Transco Gas Emergency FREEPHONE number 0800 111 999

Cold Calling

If someone comes to your door you do not have to buy anything. Ask yourself some questions before you give anyone any money

- Do I want it?
- Can I afford it?
- Will I ever use it
- Do I know and trust the seller

Do not feel you have to buy something when someone is at your door. Do not sign anything until you have had a chance to read everything and understand what you are buying.

- If you don't want anything - say "no thank you" and close the door.
- If a salesperson is in your house and you want them to go - just ask them to leave.
- If the salesperson won't leave - phone 999 and ask for the police.
- If you buy something always get a receipt.

If you have signed something and don't know what you have signed for or don't want the service anymore contact Trading Standards

Bogus Callers

Most callers are genuine, but some are not.

Always be on your guard when anyone you're not expecting calls at your home.

Types of bogus callers

- Bogus callers sometimes work in pairs. One might distract you while the other steals your property.
- Bogus 'officials' may be smartly dressed. They may pretend to represent an organisation.
- Bogus 'workmen' may say that they need to come in to check something or make urgent repairs.

A genuine caller will:

- make an appointment first.
- carry identification with their photograph on it.

If in doubt, call the company to confirm their identity.

When the door bell rings "What should you do?"

- Check the door chain

Always put the chain on before you open the door.

- See who's there

Look through the door viewer or window.

- Ask for identification

Leave the door chain on while you check the identity card carefully. A genuine caller will not mind being asked.

- Take your time

Don't be put under pressure. If in doubt ask them to return when you have someone else with you.

- Never sign

Never feel under pressure to sign anything or to hand over any money.

Garden Safety

A garden should be a fun and safe place. You can make your garden a safe place and get the best out of it by following these simple safety rules:

- Repair and clear uneven paving slabs, broken concrete, muddy or moss covered paths as quickly as possible.
- Keep chemicals, like weedkillers and fertilisers under lock and key, and always in their original containers.
- Keep paths free of leaves and moss.
- Cut back any plants that you might trip on.
- Make your paths wide enough to use with a stick or walking frame.
- Put all your garden equipment away when you are finished.
- Take care with overhanging trees and unprotected canes.
- Put hanging baskets where you are able to reach them easily.
- Fence off ponds or swimming pools or use a child-proof fixed cover.
- Always make sure an adult is around when young children are in the garden.
- Be careful when using any power tools, always read the instructions carefully and use an RCD adaptor to protect you from suffering an electric shock.

Some tips for the senior Gardeners.

- Check all plugs and cables on your tools and don't try to repair any worn cables, get them replaced.
- Do some simple bending and stretching exercises before you start. This will loosen up your muscles and help to avoid strain and injury.
- Try tools before you buy to make sure you are able to use them comfortably and safely.
- Look out for adapted tools, which you can use without bending down or kneeling.
- Do not try to carry too much at a time - use a light watering can.
- Don't rush any work you do in the garden, take your time.
- Stop before you get too tired - do not "do that extra little bit".