

## Safe At Home!

*Make Your Environment "Accident-proof"*

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Every year hundreds of Arizona residents are either killed or injured because of household accidents. Most of these accidents COULD be prevented!

This guide is to serve as a starter for your own home safety inspection. Home hazards vary with the type of home and its state of repair as well as the number and ages of its inhabitants and their physical condition.

The figures quoted here to emphasize the dangers are only in terms of fatalities, or deaths. More important, however, may be the larger number of people injured and disabled each year through home accidents.

In 1974, eighty persons in Arizona were killed by **FALLS**. This accounted for approximately one-fourth of all fatal home accidents in the state. Fifty-nine of those killed were over 65 years of age.

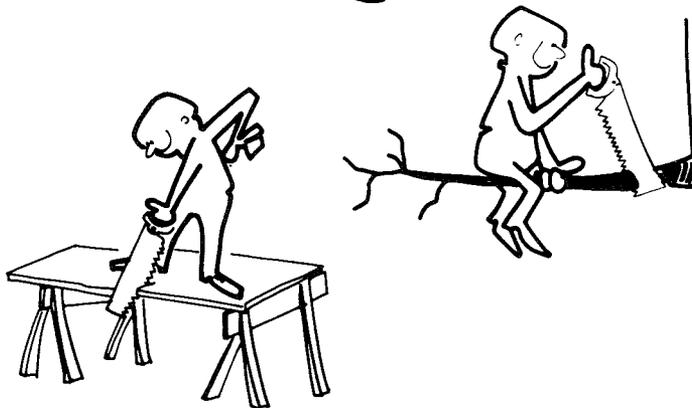
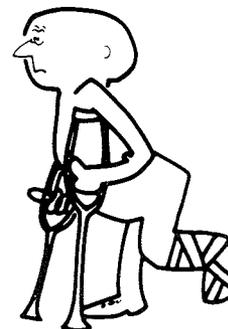
### Check the list. Do any of these exist in *your* home?

- No light on stairways or steps
- Steps in need of repair
- No handrails on stairways or steps
- Objects accumulating on steps
- No children's gate at head and/or foot of stairs
- Slight changes in floor level, i.e., single step split levels
- No night light (especially in bedroom, bathroom, or hallway)
- Carpets in need of repair or with curled up edges
- Unanchored throw rugs
- Slippery floors from wax, spilled grease, or liquids
- Toys, tools, or pets lying on floor, steps, or lawn
- Trailing extension cords
- Too few sturdy pieces of furniture for older people to use for orientation or support.
- Heavy objects stored above arm level
- No step stool or ladder for reaching high places
- No grab bar in tub or shower
- No non-skid protection in tub/shower

Falls are listed throughout the nation and in Arizona as the one greatest single source of accidental household injuries.

Steps and stairways *a/ways* invite danger.

The first and foremost recommendation is that they be well lighted—with light switches at *both* top and



bottom. Handrails are recommended on both sides of the stair so that they can be grabbed, if needed, with either hand.

Though one single step may not seem dangerous, it has been found to be more so than groupings of two or three steps, especially for older people who wear bifocal lenses. Persons anticipating buying a new home for retirement should be wary of the split level houses.

Night lights which provide general illumination or those which locate a light switch are helpful. The former may be preferred since adjusting to the glare of sudden bright light is hard for many people.

Throw rugs can be anchored with rubber jar rings or pieces of foam rubber glued to the back.

Waxed floors can be made less slippery by polishing to a very hard finish.

Research indicates that as people get older they tend to prefer to have their rooms more crowded with furniture. Contrary to what might be expected, there is less danger from older people bumping into furniture than there is benefit derived from their use of these objects for orientation and support.

"Arm level" here means the distance from just above the shoulder to just below the waist. This is the area in which individuals have most control of their bodies. Above or below this area one can get easily overbalanced. Heavy objects, requiring greater muscular strength or control, should be stored as nearly as possible within arm level. Lighter objects can be safely stored above or below "arm level."



Falls in the bathroom are particularly dangerous because of the unresisting nature of porcelain and tile. Mats equipped with suction cups or patterned pieces of rubber or plastic stuck permanently to the bottom of a tub or shower can be helpful in reducing the danger of falling.

In 1974, sixty-eight persons in Arizona were killed by **FIRES**. This accounted for approximately one-fifth of all fatal home accidents in the state. Twenty-eight were persons 15 to 65 years of age.

**Check the list. Do any of these exist in your home?**

- Smoking in bed
- Matches within reach of children
- No fire screens on fireplaces
- Open flames on stoves (especially if hard to reach items are stored above)
- Saucepan handles turned toward outer edge of stoves
- Only one easy means of exit from any room
- No fire extinguishers
- Flammable cleaning solutions used in unventilated areas
- Combustibles (flammable liquids, oil base paints and thinner) stored too close to heaters
- Oily rags, mops, etc., not stored in metal containers
- Dirt and grease accumulating in fans, motors, and ventilation hoods
- Blown fuses
- Broken or defective fixtures
- Flexible cords nailed or tacked to baseboard or walls

One city fire department reported that they have found the most frequent causes of home fires are:

- smoking and careless use of matches
- careless use and storage of flammable liquids (especially gas during the gas shortage)
- kitchen cooking accidents (especially from grease)

Note that fires are given here as most fatal to persons other than the very young and the very old—quite possibly because they're the ones most apt to be helping fight the fire. However, this is contrary to what the fire department reported. In their experience, they said, fire killed more children (who would hide in fright) and older people (who were invalids and could not escape) than any other age group. Cause of death was usually given as suffocation from toxic gases.

If a fire extinguisher is not handy, ordinary baking soda can be used to help snuff out a grease fire.

The law requires that fabrics used in small children's clothing must be flame proofed. Not much has yet been done about flame proofing bedding, however.

Synthetic fibers used in much of the carpeting that is sold is much less susceptible to sparks than wool or cotton.

The fact that the open flame of a gas stove can be more dangerous than the hot coil of an electric stove might be an important consideration for older people or families with very small children when buying appliances or selecting a furnished rental.

A blown fuse indicates a strain on the carrying capacity of the wiring system. Any reduction in the use of electricity will help to relieve the danger of fire from overloaded wiring.

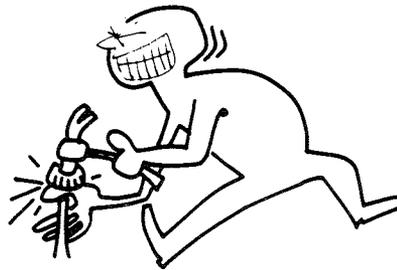
In 1974, 167 persons were killed by **POISONS** in Arizona. Since these cases represent only those poisonings reported voluntarily, the true number is probably larger. In addition, there were 2,787 poisoning cases where the person recovered. Accidental poisoning accounted for nearly half of the reported cases, with one-third listed as self-poisonings.

**Check the list. Do any of these exist in your home?**

- Uninstructed use of pesticides
- Pesticides left in reach of children, whether in use or stored
- Housecleaning supplies in reach of children
- Soft drink bottles used as storage containers
- Medicines kept in unlocked cabinets
- Over medication
- Buying or storing bulging cans of food
- Preparing home canned foods (other than acid fruits and vegetables) without use of pressure canner
- Taste testing off-color or unusual smelling foods
- Serving any home canned meats and vegetables without first heating to 212° for at least 10 minutes

While accidental poisoning accounts for most cases involving children under five years of age, this group also accounts for 40 percent of all poisoning cases. The age group 16–30 years accounts for the second largest group of reported poisonings (27 percent).

The main category of causative agents continues to be internal medicine, accounting for nearly 60 percent of all reported poisonings. This includes, in order of cases, tranquilizers, analgesics other than aspirin, barbiturates, aspirin, antihistamines, cough medicines,



and laxatives. Household preparations, with over 5 percent of reported cases, rank second. Soaps and detergents, disinfectants, bleach, lye and drain cleaners, and floor polish—in that order—are the most frequent cases.

Categories accounting for less than 5 percent of reported cases include petroleum products, external medicines (liniment, antiseptics), plants, pesticides (primarily mothballs and household sprays), cosmetics, and paints. In some cases, more than one causative agent is involved in a poisoning. If all agents are listed, then there were 3,466 poisoning reports.

Common household items account for the majority of poisonings. Many people treat these common and relatively non-toxic materials without proper concern. Even low-toxicity materials can be quite *hazardous*: sloppy handling and storage can create hazardous situations, which could be prevented with a little care. Lock cabinets can be purchased as stock items in most building supply houses and are being installed as standard features in many new homes. Keep this in mind when building or buying a new home, or when remodeling.

In 1974, forty-eight persons in Arizona were killed by **DROWNING** in or around the home. This was a little over 10 percent of all fatal home accidents in the state. Thirty-two victims were under four years of age.

#### Check the list. Do any of these exist in *your* home?

- Leaving children unattended for even brief period of time
- Uninstructed use of swimming areas
- Unfenced pools
- Unlocked gates on pool fences

Eighty-six cases of drowning were mentioned in the list of public accidents in Arizona in 1972. Those specified as home accidents took place either in the home or on the premises—presumably in the bath tub or in a swimming pool.

It's possible to "drown-proof" even very small children. Teach them to swim before they learn to walk.

"In the eyes of the law, an unfenced pool is looked upon as an attractive nuisance" for which the property owner is held responsible.

In 1974, eighty-nine persons in Arizona were killed by some type of household accident **other** than those already mentioned.

These accounted for approximately one-fourth of all fatal home accidents in the state.

#### Check the list. Do any of these exist in *your* home?

- Loaded guns in the home
- Large unmarked glass areas, i.e., floor to ceiling doors and windows
- Plastic garment bags left within reach of children
- Unapproved children's toys
- Defective consumer products

Many believe that a loaded gun is the best protection against breaking and entering. Most law enforcement officers believe otherwise. It's their opinion that an armed burglar has a decided advantage over a surprised home owner. Guns, particularly in the hands of an inexperienced person, are an invitation to an accident rather than protection.

To ward off the danger of large glass areas, decals at eye level are thought to be your second best protection. First is to place some sort of a barrier, such as a planter or a piece of furniture, in front of the area to keep people from walking into it.

A Toy Safety and Child Protection Act has been on the books for several years. Now the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is publishing rules enabling buyers to get full refunds on thousands of banned toys and hazardous substances. The rules took effect March 1, 1974. Manufacturers are required to notify wholesalers and retailers when a product has been banned. Retailers are required to post, on each floor of the store where the item had been offered, a poster captioned "Banned Articles or Substances List and Repurchase Procedures" along with refund information.

**REMEMBER**...experience *may* be the best teacher. In the case of accidents, that can often be fatal! Rather than learn by *your own* experience, profit from that of the 343 persons reported here who are no longer with us. It makes good sense!

*We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Arizona Health Department and the Poison Control Center, Tucson, for providing fatality statistical data included in this publication.*

Trade names used in this publication are for identification only and do not imply endorsement of products named or criticism of similar products not mentioned.