

Special Report

Spring Home Safety Checklist

Fidelity Associates Insurance & Financial Services

Spring is officially here! The time of year when birds start singing, flowers poke their heads up and trees start getting their leaves. It's also the time of year when people start clearing out the accumulation of winter clutter.

As you go about your spring cleaning chores, take the opportunity to make sure your home is safe and secure as well. Use the following Spring Home Safety Checklist as a guide.

- ❑ **Carbon monoxide and smoke detectors.** Many people change the batteries in their carbon monoxide and smoke detectors when they set their clocks ahead for Daylight Savings. But, if you're not one of them, now is a good time to get it done.
- ❑ **Flashlight batteries.** In many areas springtime means thunderstorms. Make sure all your flashlights have fresh batteries in case the power goes out.
- ❑ **Fire extinguishers.** It's recommended that be inspected every 30 days. So, if it's been more than 30 days since you inspected the fire extinguishers in your home, now's a good time to do it. There are 3 questions you should ask yourself during your inspection. 1) Is the extinguisher in the correct location? 2) Is it visible and accessible? 3) Is the gauge or pressure indicator in the green zone?
- ❑ **Light bulbs.** Make sure all your light bulbs are the correct wattage for the lamp or socket they're in. Florescent light bulbs can help save money on your power bill, consider making the switch if you aren't already using them.
- ❑ **Electrical outlets.** You can do an initial inspection yourself by checking for loose fitting outlets. But, you'll want to have a licensed electrician check for any loose wiring inside the outlets that might pose a fire hazard.
- ❑ **Household chemicals.** Go through your cleaning supplies and other household chemicals to check for leaking containers and things you no longer use or need. Be sure to dispose of these hazardous chemicals properly according to the recommendations of your state and/or county.
- ❑ **Medicine cabinets.** Take stock of everything in your medicine cabinets and properly dispose of any outdated prescriptions and over-the-counter medications.
- ❑ **First aid kits.** While you're checking your medicine cabinets, go a step further and examine your first aid kits. Properly dispose of anything that is outdated and restock things that are running low or depleted.
- ❑ **Child safety locks.** Check any existing child safety locks to be sure they're functioning properly. You may also want to consider other places where they should be installed.

- ❑ **Family emergency plan.** Every household should have a family emergency plan in place. Review your plan and rehearse it together at least once a year.
- ❑ **Washer and Dryer.** Pull your washer and dryer out and clean underneath each. Check the hoses on your washer for any leaks. Check and clean the dryer hose and exhaust duct, removing any lint, dust and other material.
- ❑ **Major Appliances.** Pull other major appliances out as well and clean underneath and behind them. Be sure to clear away any lint or debris from ventilation areas before you return them to their space.
- ❑ **Fireplaces and Woodstoves.** Spring is a great time to clean your stove pipes and get them ready for next winter's use. This way, you're ready whenever cold weather strikes.
- ❑ **Furnace.** Check and replace furnace filters so they're ready to go next fall as well.
- ❑ **Air Conditioner/Swamp Cooler.** Time to maintain that air conditioner or swamp cooler. Check your user's manual for the proper maintenance procedure for your specific unit.
- ❑ **Windows and Doors.** As you're cleaning your windows, check the locks and screens to make sure they're in proper working order. Check the locks on all exterior doors as well.
- ❑ **Decks and Patios.** Inspect your decks and patios for loose railings and boards as well as raised nails or screws.
- ❑ **Barbecue grill.** While you're on the patio, check the condition of your barbecue grill. If you have a gas grill be sure to check all hoses and connections to make sure there are no leaks. Also make sure the handle on the lid is secure and that the igniter works.
- ❑ **Recreational equipment.** Make sure all playground equipment, bikes, skateboards, etc. are in safe working condition before you or your family use them.
- ❑ **Roof and Gutters.** Inspect your roof to make sure that it's in good repair and will stand up against wind and rain. Replace or have a professional replace any parts that are leaking or loose. Check and clean your rain gutters and downspouts as well to keep them in good working condition so when the rain does come, they can do their job.

Many of the things on this list can be performed by the knowledgeable homeowner. However, there are some tasks on this list that should be done by a professional – such as a licensed electrician to inspect your electrical outlets.

Going through this checklist as you're doing your spring cleaning chores will help you ensure that you and your family enjoy a safe and happy summer.