

Home Safe Home

A safe home is a joy to live in and it does not have to be difficult or costly to achieve.



You may feel as fit and alert as ever but a little extra time and effort spent on increasing home safety is, nevertheless, going to be time well spent.



No matter what type of property you live in we hope that this booklet will provide you with some useful advice and information about making your home safer.



The Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership is responsible for co-ordinating a joint agency response to community safety issues across the city.

The Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership comes together under the auspices of wider Community Planning in Edinburgh, the Local Government Scotland Act and under guidance and direction from the Scottish Executive.

You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats if you ask us. Please contact ITS on 0131 242 8181 and quote reference number 06609. ITS can also give information on community language translations. You can get more copies of this document by calling 0131 529 3030.

如欲查詢本文件的翻譯資訊，請致電愛丁堡市議會傳譯及翻譯服務部(ITS)，電話0131 242 8181並說明檔案編號 06609。

اپنی کیوبلی میں بولی جانے والی زبان میں اس دستاویز کے ترجمے کے متعلق معلومات کے لئے انٹرنیشنل اینڈ ٹرانسلیٹیشن سروس کو 0131 242 8181 پر فون کریں اور ریفرنس نمبر 06609 کا حوالہ دیں۔

এই দলিলপত্রের অনুবাদ আপনার সম্প্রদায়ের ভাষায় পেতে হলে ইন্টারপ্রিটেশন এ্যান্ড ট্রান্সলেশন সার্ভিস-এর সাথে 0131 242 8181 নম্বরে ফোন করে রেফারেন্স নম্বর 06609 উল্লেখ করুন।

إذا كنتم ترغبون في معلومات عن ترجمة هذا المستند إلى لغة جاليتكم، الرجاء الاتصال هاتفياً بمكتب الترجمة (ITS) على الرقم 0131 242 8181 وذكر الإشارة 06609

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Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service



Fire Safety

With a little planning, almost all house fires can be prevented. By reading the following information and taking a little time and effort you can reduce the risk of fire in your home.

Smoke Alarms



If you live in the Lothian and Borders area, you can get a 10 year alarm fitted for free from the Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service by [calling 0800 169 0320](tel:08001690320).

- Fit at least one on each floor of your home, ideally on the hallway or landing ceilings.
- Don't put a smoke alarm in the kitchen where it can be set off accidentally. You can buy smoke alarms fitted with a 'hush button' so you can silence the alarm if it goes off by mistake.
- Once a week test the battery. You can get certain smoke alarms which have a test switch at a low level if you can't reach the detector easily.
- Press the test button until the alarm sounds.
- Once a year change the battery (unless it's a 10-year alarm). Care and Repair Handyperson Service can even change it for you.
- Twice a year, open the case and gently vacuum the inside to remove dust from the sensors. If it doesn't open, vacuum through the holes.
- After 10 years it's best to replace your alarm with a whole new unit.

Do you have hearing problems?

- If you are deaf, a little hard of hearing or simply a heavy sleeper, you should consider a specialist type of smoke alarm system.

- You should contact **Deaf Action** by Telephone on 0131 652 3206 or Textphone on 0131 557 0419 to get advice on the options available as well as how to get financial assistance.

Kitchen Fire Safety

- Keep electrical leads and items which can catch fire easily, such as tea towels, oven gloves and loose clothing, away from the cooker and toaster.
- Keep the oven, toaster, hob and grill clean. A build up of crumbs, fat and grease can easily catch fire.
- Keep electrical leads and appliances away from water.
- Why not keep a fire blanket in the kitchen?
 - You can use it to wrap around someone whose clothes have caught fire or to smother a small fire. Ask your local Fire and Rescue Service about the best one to buy.



Don't leave cooking unattended.

Fire starts when your attention stops.

- If you deep-fry food, dry it before you put it in the hot oil. If the oil starts to smoke, turn off the heat and leave the pan to cool.



Never fill chip pans more than one-third full of oil.

- Don't use matches or lighters to light gas cookers. Spark devices are safer.
- Make sure all saucepan handles don't stick out from the hob.
- Don't drape tea towels over the cooker to dry.

Electric Blankets



- Don't leave blankets folded. Store them flat or rolled up to protect the internal wiring.
- Check them regularly for wear and tear.
- Only leave a blanket switched on all night if it has thermostatic controls for safe all night use. Otherwise, unplug it before you get into bed.
- Don't get blankets wet.
- If the blanket does get wet, don't use it until it is completely dry.
 - Never switch it on to dry it.
- Replace blankets every 10 years. Never buy second-hand blankets and look out for the British or European safety mark.



Smoking



Every three days someone dies from a fire caused by a cigarette.

- Take extra care smoking if you are drowsy, are taking prescription drugs or have been drinking. It's too easy to fall asleep and not notice that a cigarette is still burning.

- Don't smoke in bed. It's too easy to fall asleep and set the bed on fire.
- Always use proper, deep ashtrays so the cigarette can't roll out.
- Make sure that when you put out a cigarette, it is really out.
- Take responsibility and keep matches and lighters out of the reach and sight of children.



It's hotter than you think - cigarettes can burn at temperatures of over 700°C.

Bedtime Routine



Just before going to bed you have a last chance to make sure that everything is safe for the night.

- Make sure that the cooker and heaters are turned off.
- Rake out fires and put spark guards in place.
- Check that there is nothing smouldering in the ashtrays.
- Pull out all plugs around the house except for those that are designed to be left on.
- Finally, close all doors as this prevents any fire spreading if one starts.



Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service

Be Prepared - Plan Ahead

- Spend some time thinking about how you would get out if there was a fire.

What would you do if your main escape route was blocked?

Would everyone know what to do?

Would you be able to escape, or do you need a 'safe room' to wait in until help arrives?

Make sure you know the basic procedure for surviving a fire.

- It might be an idea to pin up the basic plan on the wall, especially if people often drop in or come to stay.

Know where the keys are kept



- You need to be able to find the door or window keys in a hurry.
- Agree with everyone you live with where they are going to be kept and keep them there.

Keep your escape route clear

- The best escape route is your normal way in and out of your home.
- Choose a second escape route in case the first one is blocked by fire.
- Keep both routes clear of obstructions.

Gas Safety



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

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

If you smell gas...

- Turn off the gas supply at the meter
- Do not use matches or smoke
- Do not turn electrical switches on or off
- Open all doors and windows
- Check appliances to see if the gas has been left switched on
- If you think you have a gas leak call Scotia Gas Network free on **0800 111 999** (24 hrs a day)

Carbon Monoxide

Each year more than 50 people die at home from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues that have not been maintained or installed properly.

Most of them live in their own home, Not in rented property.

Symptoms include;

- Tiredness
- Drowsiness
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Chest pains

Carbon monoxide is an odourless, invisible, poisonous and potentially fatal gas. **Remember you can't see it, taste it or smell it.**

Carbon monoxide is given off when any coal, gas, oil or wood is burned and can kill, without warning, in just a few hours. People are most vulnerable when they are asleep.

How to prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

How to spot it...

- A flame, normally blue, appears yellow or orange;
- Stains or soot appear;
- Coal or wood fires do not burn well or go out altogether;
- If ventilation in a room in the house or workplace is poor;
- Smoke comes into the room;
- You will feel dizziness, fatigue, nausea, lethargy, headache and other flu-like symptoms.

Things to do...

- Check all gas appliances for safety especially in rooms fitted with draught excluders or double glazing and conservatories;
- Carbon monoxide is produced by heating and cooking appliances fuelled by coal, smokeless fuels, wood and oil. If you suspect that they are installed incorrectly or if ventilation is poor, get them checked by a CORGI registered engineer.
- Empty ash from solid fuel appliances regularly.
- Ensure the chimney is swept at least once a year.
- [Call Care & Repair Handyperson Service for free installation and advice.](#)
0131 220 7630

ALWAYS remember to follow the instructions when using gas cylinders and paraffin heaters.



Electrical Safety

Electricity is safe and easy to use, but accidents can and do happen. You can protect yourself and your home by following these common sense safety rules.

- Never repair or rejoin cables - always replace the entire cable;
- Do not run cables under the carpet - it will get worn and damaged without you seeing it;
- Keep cables away from the cooker;



- Always try to use one plug in one socket and never use more than one adaptor per socket;
- Use appliances as they should be used, e.g. clean the fluff out of a tumble drier and don't overload a washing machine;
- Always unplug phone chargers when not in use;
- Never handle anything electrical with wet hands;
- Never take any electrical appliance into the bathroom;
- Check that your plugs have the correct fuses in them.
- Use a Residual Current Device (RCD) when doing any DIY.

DANGER! Look out for:

- hot plugs and sockets
- Brown scorch marks on sockets or plugs
- fuses that blow or circuit breakers that trip for no obvious reason
- Lights flickering



Winter Warmth

Here are some ways to keep warm - even in the coldest, dampest weather.

- Keep your home warm - at least heat the room where you spend most of your day. The temperature should be at least 70°F.
- Eat at least one hot meal every day and make sure you drink hot drinks regularly, especially last thing at night.
- Use an electric blanket or hot water bottle to warm your bed. Not both. Please remember to turn off the electric blanket before you get into bed.
- Wear lots of thin layers of clothing. These will keep you warmer than one thick jumper as it will hold your body heat and keep you warmer.
- Look at house insulation. Grants may be available for roof insulation.
- Draughty doors and windows can be insulated cheaply and easily. Visit your local DIY store for details. Or contact **Care and Repair Handyperson Service**.
- If you cannot move about or are confined to bed, your need for warmth may be increased.
- Do not risk hypothermia. If you are worried that you may not be able to keep warm enough contact your local social services who will gladly help and advise you.
- Consider having a cold alarm installed by **Care and Repair Handyperson Service for free**.
- **Warmburgh** can give free advice which could save you up to £200 a year on heating bills. [Freephone 0800 512 012](tel:0800512012)



Falls

The consequences of falling get more serious as we get older; our bodies take longer to heal and the damage to our confidence and independence can be the most difficult of all.

However, falls are not a 'normal' part of getting older. There are measures that you can take which will reduce your chance of falling and the damage done.

Improve your safety habits

- Be aware of your limitations;
- Try not to get up too quickly from your bed or chair - take things at your own steady speed.
- When walking up and down stairs take it steady and hold the banister as you go.



- Take care of your feet - more than 80% of people have one or more foot problems. Wear low-heeled shoes with good grip, not loose fitting slippers, so that your ankles have some support.
- Reaching up to change a light bulb or to get something from a high cupboard can be dangerous. Never stand on a stool or chair to do this. Use a stepladder or ask someone to do it for you. Try to keep things that you use a lot in low cupboards - this will make life easier.



- If you have glasses, try to wear them. Sometimes using bifocals can be disorientating. Talk to your optician about having two different pairs of glasses.
- Check your medicine - some can make you dizzy. Ask your doctor about this particularly if you take a number of different medicines.
- Keep active - exercise can improve strength, balance and co-ordination, all of which may prevent you falling.

Improve your surroundings

- Make sure that all parts of your house are well lit so that you do not trip in the dark and put the light on if you get up in the night;



- Try to arrange your furniture so that you have plenty of room to walk around it;
- If the kitchen floor gets wet, wipe it up straight away;

- Use a rubber mat in your bath or perhaps get a handrail fitted to help you get out of the bath more easily and safely;



- Keep the floor, particularly the stairs, free of clutter;
- Repair or replace carpets with worn areas, holes or long threads;

- Check that mats and rugs are secure and have no tears or wrinkles;



- Keep things that you use often in easy reach;
- Think about getting an answer machine or an extra phone extension so that you are not tempted to run and answer it;

The Care and Repair Handyperson Service can fit the above aids to help keep you safer for [free](#).

If you do fall...

- Do not panic. Stay still for a few minutes and try to calm down;
- Call for help if you can;
- You may feel able to try to get up - use a sturdy piece of furniture to help and move slowly;
- If you cannot get up try to get to something that will keep you warm while you wait for help, e.g. bedclothes, cushions, a coat.

Medication

Knowing about the medicines that you are putting into your body can mean the difference between good and poor health.

Pills, pills and more pills. Managing what you take, and when, can feel very complicated. Please read the following tips below. If there is just one that is new then it will be worth the time taken.



Always tell your doctor about all the medication that you are taking including vitamin supplements, over the counter medicines such as paracetamol, herbal medicines or alternative treatments such as acupuncture;

- Let your doctor know about your past reactions to certain medicines. Your tolerance may change as you get older. Some people become more sensitive to tranquillisers, for example;
- Ask your doctor the following questions:-
 - What is the medicine for?
 - How long should I take it for?
 - When should I take it?
 - Should I take it before, after or with food?
 - Do the tablets have to be taken whole or can I crush them?
 - Can I drink alcohol while on these?
 - What are the side effects and what do I do if I have them?
- Write down the answers to these questions, or ask your doctor to. Keep the answers somewhere safe, e.g. on a fridge door or in the medicine box.
 - Get a 'Safelink' bottle. This is a plastic bottle you keep in the fridge with your emergency contact details, medication and other details which are useful to the emergency services.

Contact Help the Aged on **0131 556 4666** for your free bottle.

- Always read and keep the medicine information leaflet that accompanies your medication.
- Check storage instructions and follow them.
- Always keep medicines in their original containers. If you find the bottles or packets difficult to open ask your pharmacist about split pill boxes. These are plastic boxes with different sections each marked with the day and time. Not only are they easy to open but you will also know if you have taken all your pills (this is very important as missing a dose can have serious effects). The pharmacist will normally put the pills in each section for you;



- Make sure you take enough medication with you on holiday;
- Never take other people's medicine;
- Carry a list of all your medication with you, in a wallet, purse or your diary, e.g. in case you need urgent treatment or are away on holiday;
- Do not stop taking medication even if the symptoms have disappeared - always talk to your doctor first. For example, an infection treated with antibiotics will start to improve within 72 hours. However, if you do not complete the course of tablets you may develop a new infection which is resistant to the medication already taken;
- Return old medication to your pharmacist for safe disposal. Don't flush it down the toilet.

Food Safety

Remember. Each year 5.5 million people in the UK get food poisoning. Food poisoning is serious, particularly if you have a weakened immune system, kidneys or other condition that makes it harder for your body to cope. Your health can be affected for the long term not just a few days.

- Throw old food away - do not be tempted to eat it, even though you hate waste. Your health is too important to gamble with;
- Always read the storage instructions and keep food:-
 - In the right place
 - At the right temperature
 - And for the right amount of time
- Keep a list on your freezer door of what is in there and when it must be eaten by. You could also attach stickers of different colours to the packaging as a reminder. E.g. green for eat before August, blue for September (remember to record your code);
- Your sense of taste or smell can be weakened by medication or illness. You may not be able to tell when meat is spoiled or milk sour. Even if a food is within date do not eat it if it looks, tastes or smells off;
- Left-overs should be stored in the fridge and eaten within two days.
- Be strict about keeping raw meat away from other foods and always wash your hands and all utensils after you have touched these foods;
- Regularly clean kitchen surfaces and keep pets food away from yours;
- Never put open cans in the fridge - move the contents to a bowl, cover and remember to use within two days;



- Keep pests out. Seal packets of dried foods like flour and breakfast cereals tightly or put the contents in a storage jar;
- Never re-freeze food once it has started to thaw;
- Double check that sausages, burgers and poultry are cooked right through. They must not be pink in the middle and when pierced with a knife the juices that run out should be clear, not bloody;
- Do not reheat foods more than once and when you do reheat make sure the food is piping hot;
- Take chilled and frozen food home quickly and put them in the fridge or freezer as soon as you get in.

- Wash hands thoroughly before preparing food, after going to the toilet and after handling pets;



- Keep your fridge and freezer at the correct temperatures - between 0° - 5°C for the fridge and -18°C for the freezer; Get a fridge thermometer to be sure.
- Store things in the fridge in the correct way. Raw meats should be at the bottom so that blood and juices don't drip on to other foods.



Garden Safety



For some people a garden is a great source of pleasure to look at, to nurture or both. For others it might be a chore - somewhere else to keep tidy or simply to hang your washing.

Whatever it means to you, the key is keeping it accessible.

This might mean practical ways to keep paths safe or enabling yourself to get some pleasure from it while sitting in your armchair - placing a bird table or bath near the window or plants that attract butterflies.

Here are a few tips to help you keep active in and with your garden:

- Keep paths free of leaves and moss which will make them slippery;
- Cut back plants that you might trip on;
- Make your paths wide enough to use with a stick or a walking frame;
- Take care with overhanging trees and unprotected canes;
- Simple bending and stretching exercises before you start will loosen up your muscles which will help to avoid strain and injury. Try to keep a good posture when gardening and vary the jobs so that different hand and body movements are needed.
- Use a kneeling stool or a padded mat to protect your knees when gardening;
- Put hanging baskets where they are easy to reach;

- Why not have some raised beds built into the garden?
They are much easier to plant and weed;



- Use ground cover plants to cut down on weeding;
- Mulches of bark, plastic, or gravel, etc. will slow down the weeds; Try tools before you buy - consider their weight, your grip and balance. Some tools are adapted to prevent bending down or kneeling;



- Allow yourself sufficient time to complete a task. Rushing can lead to mistakes and injuries;
- Do not carry too much at a time - use a light watering can;
- You should have a tetanus injection every ten years. Tetanus is a serious infection of the nervous system. Ask your doctor about this or look it up on the internet;
- Stop before you get too tired - do not 'do that extra little bit'.





The **City of Edinburgh Council** and **Care and Repair Edinburgh** want to help [you](#) prevent accidents in the home. A trained volunteer will check your home for visual hazards and advise you on the best way to reduce them or can help eliminate them, e.g. changing fuses and fitting plugs.

The **Homecheck** service:

- Is [FREE](#) and available to anyone **over 60 years of age or who has a disability**.
- Is available to [ALL](#) householders whether owner, council tenant, private tenant or housing association.

For more information on the scheme or to book an appointment to have your home checked call either:

Jim Black
Home Safety Officer
Services for Communities
City of Edinburgh Council
Chesser House
500 Gorgie Road
Edinburgh EH11 3YJ

Tel: 0131 469 5192

John Richardson
Co-ordinator
Handyperson Service
Care and Repair
4 Queen Street
Edinburgh
EH2 1JE

Tel: 0131 220 7630



Handyperson Service

What is the Handyperson Service?

- It is a team of Handyperson Volunteers who will carry out DIY tasks for any person over the age of 60 years or people who have a disability.
- It enables people to remain living in their own homes and to live in comfort, safety and security.

What kind of tasks does the service assist people with?

A few examples are:

- Giving advice on home safety and security.
- Changing lightbulbs and smoke alarm batteries.
- Fitting door chains, viewers and door locks.
- Draught proofing doors and windows.
- Putting up shelves and fixing cupboard doors.
- Changing fuses and fitting plugs.
- Hanging pictures and changing curtains.
- Moving small items of furniture within the home.

What does the service cost?

..... It doesn't!

There is no charge for the Handyperson Service – you will only be charged for the materials purchased on your behalf.

Volunteers needed!

Do you have a relative or friend who may be interested in becoming a VOLUNTEER? If so, please ask them to contact the Handyperson Service on:

0131 220 7630

The Handyperson Service is always looking for volunteers, both male and female. The only qualifications required are a positive, caring attitude, some spare time and the ability to help clients with small tasks around the home. DIY or basic joinery skills would be an advantage, but just a willing pair of hands is the only real requirement. Training, insurance and out of pocket expenses will be supplied.

What other services do Care and Repair offer?

The Home Improvement Service can:

- **Provide technical advice about the type of repair, improvement or adaptation your home needs.**
- **Help you to apply for grants.**
- **Provide advice and assistance in raising funds if grants are not available for the repairs you require.**
- **Advise whether you may be able to receive a grant for repairs, improvements or adaptations.**
- **Act on your behalf to organise and oversee building work.**
- **Provide temporary accommodation while major works are in progress.**

The Small Repairs Service can:

- **Replace broken sash cords**
- **Re-putty existing windows**
- **Fit locks and other security items**
- **Fit draught excluders**
- **Replace rotted half window sills**
- **Fit handles to doors and windows**
- **Fit handrails and bath/shower aids**

A small charge is made for this service.



Useful Numbers

On this page you will find some telephone numbers which you can use to get more information about keeping a safe home.

Home Safety

Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service 0800 169 0320
Home Fire Safety Check (Free Service)

Homecheck 0131 469 5192/0131 220 7630
(Free Service to check the safety of your house)

Care and Repair - Handyperson Service 0131 220 7630

Scotia Gas Network 0800 111 999
(Call if you suspect a gas leak) (24 hrs a day)

Health

NHS 24 08454 24 24 24
Confidential telephone health advice and information service.

Help and Advice

Warmburgh 0800 512 012

Victim Support Edinburgh 0131 668 2556

Age Concern 0845 8330200

Help the Aged (Safelink) 0131 556 4666

Police 0131 311 3131

Housing

Community Care Housing 0131 529 7099

Community Alarm Service 0131 529 7714

Garden Maintenance (City of Edinburgh Council) 0131 529 7862
Available to all those aged 80 and over or 60 and over with disability and in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit.