

# SAFETY IN THE HOME

Accidents and falls in the home can seriously compromise an older person's ability to live independently, especially those living alone. Poor lighting, slippery or uneven surfaces on floors, paths or stairs, awkwardly located appliances, switches, handles, etc are common causes of accidents in the home. Preventing accidents is simply a matter of ensuring that routine maintenance and repairs are carried out. However, as a result of age related changes in vision and mobility for example, it may also be necessary to consider other preventative measures.

For example, if you have difficulties bending, you might need to consider reorganising your cupboards so that more frequently used items are located at a height that is more comfortable, and therefore safer, for you to access. If you have problems with balance or mobility, it might be an idea to consider installing hand rails, especially in wet areas such as the bathroom.

The following checklist will assist you to evaluate your home safety level.

## *A Home Safety Checklist*

Check your home and rate your safety level. Answer the following questions by ticking either the "YES" or "NO" box.

	Yes	No
<b>Kitchen</b>		
Do you store frequently used items in cupboards between your shoulders and knees for easy access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you mop up spills as soon as they happen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a fire extinguisher or fire blanket in your kitchen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Bathroom</b>		
Are the floors in your bathroom slip resistant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have handrails in the bath, shower and toilet to provide you with assistance when standing, sitting or turning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you walk directly into your shower without having to step over a raised edge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your soap, shampoo, and towel within easy reach?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have slip resistant mats in your bathroom?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a bath seat to assist you when getting in and out of the bath?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## *A Home Safety Checklist Continued*

	Yes	No
<b>Loungeroom</b>		
Are the walkways well lit and clear of furniture and other obstacles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the electrical or telephone cords neatly secured against the wall and away from walk areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the rugs secured so that they do not curl up and cause a trip?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you have a gas fire, is it serviced regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Bedroom</b>		
Can you turn on a light without having to get out of bed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a telephone by your bed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Garden</b>		
Are your garden paths and steps in good repair with no uneven joins or broken slabs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your garden paths slip resistant when wet or dry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your paths well lit at night with light switches placed in easy to reach locations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel steady when you use stairs and steps?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your stairs well lit and easy to see at night and day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you reach light switches without having to walk in the dark?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **How Did You Score?**

If you mostly answered “No” to any of these questions, you may need to consider the safety of your home at present.

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

Your Local Home Assist/Secure Coordinator

4153 1099

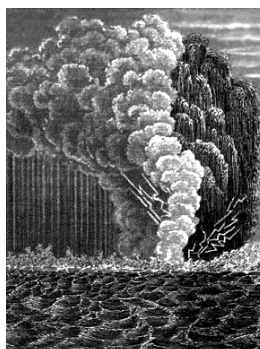
## ***Severe Storm and Cyclone Safety***

### **Before the Storm & Cyclone Season:-**

- ☂ Check that your house and roof are in good condition.
- ☂ Trim tree branches and clear property of loose material.
- ☂ Make sure you have a First Aid Kit.
- ☂ List emergency contact numbers and know your community disaster plan.
- ☂ Have masking tape (for glass), plastic sheeting and large garbage bags (for emergency rain protection) on hand.
- ☂ Prepare an emergency kit including:
  - ✂ First Aid kit.
  - ✂ Portable radio with fresh spare batteries.
  - ✂ Torch, fuel lamp, candles and matches.
  - ✂ Water containers, canned food, can opener, self contained cooking gear, essential spare clothes.

### **As the Storm or Cyclone Approaches:-**

- ☂ Keep tuned to the local radio or TV station for further information.
- ☂ Shelter and secure pets and animals.
- ☂ Fuel vehicles and place undercover.
- ☂ Fill water containers.
- ☂ Disconnect all electrical appliances.
- ☂ Prepare an evacuation kit (in small bags) consisting of your emergency kit, warm and tough clothing, personal essentials and valuables in plastic bags.
- ☂ Remain indoors!



## **When the Storm or Cyclone Strikes:-**

- ☂ Stay inside and shelter in the strongest part of the house (bathroom or cellar) well clear of windows.
- ☂ If necessary, cover yourself with a mattress, blanket, doona or tarpaulin. Anchor yourself to a strong fixture (such as water pipes) or get under a strong table or bed.
- ☂ Listen to radio/TV for updates.
- ☂ If outdoors, find emergency shelter - not under a tree.
- ☂ If driving, stop clear of trees, power lines or streams.
- ☂ Avoid using the telephone during a storm.
- ☂ Beware the calm 'eye'. Don't assume the cyclone is over. Violent winds will soon resume from the opposite direction. Wait until you get the all clear from emergency services.

## **On Warning of Local Evacuation**

- ☂ Lock your dwelling and switch off electricity, gas, water, etc. Take your evacuation kit.
- ☂ Wear strong footwear and clothing to protect yourself from cuts and debris.
- ☂ Heed warnings and advice given.

## **After the Storm or Cyclone**

- ☂ Listen to local radio for official warnings and advice. Don't go outside until advised that it is safe.
- ☂ If you had to evacuate, don't go home until advised. Use a recommended route and stay calm.
- ☂ Don't make unnecessary phone calls.
- ☂ Beware of fallen power lines, damaged buildings, fallen trees and flooded water courses.
- ☂ Don't go sight seeing. Stay home and help others.

## *Fire Safety*

**The Retired Firefighters Association of Queensland in partnership  
with Queensland Fire & Rescue Authority is proud to present  
SENIORS FIRE ED**

Seniors Fire Ed is a fire awareness and home safety program developed specifically for the older person by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority (QFRA) and the Retired Firefighters Association of Queensland (RFAQ). Australia's over 65's group has been identified by the QFRA as the group most at risk of death or injury as a result of fires in their homes.

Seniors Fire Ed addresses this risk by providing fire safety tips relevant to seniors including electrical hazards in the home, smoke alarms, security versus home escape, and planning and practicing your escape plan. It is presented by retired firefighters who combine their vast knowledge of fire safety with an understanding of the needs and concerns of the senior community.

As more and more Retired Firefighters throughout Queensland take up the opportunity to share their valuable knowledge with others through the Seniors Fire Ed program, Seniors clubs and groups will be able to take advantage of this free service.

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

Tel: 1300 369 003

## Smoke Alarms

### Why Smoke Alarms Are Important

- 🔊 When there is a fire in the house, the house fills with toxic smoke long before heat and flame can spread.
- 🔊 Most people who die in fires are killed by toxic smoke. Many are never touched by flames.
- 🔊 Most people who die in fires die at night because they are asleep. Your nose goes to sleep when you do.
- 🔊 A smoke alarm is your safeguard against danger because it senses the presence of smoke at a very early stage and sounds an alarm. It is your night security service.
- 🔊 A smoke alarm gives you time to escape before the smoke has made it too difficult.

*There is a special need for smoke alarms if you fit security grills to your windows and/or deadlocks to your doors.*

### What Types of Smoke Alarms are Available?

*There are two main types of smoke alarms:*

- 🔊 Battery operated.
- 🔊 Hard wired electrically operated - with battery back-up. Generally considered to be more reliable in the long term.

*Other options include:*

- 🔊 Inter-connectable models which sound alarms in all connected units.
- 🔊 Special models for kitchens and caravans.
- 🔊 Alarms with emergency lights.
- 🔊 Alarms for the hearing impaired.

### Types of Smoke alarms which are Approved

It is strongly recommended that you only purchase smoke alarms that carry the Standards Australia Mark or Scientific Services Laboratory (SSL) identification.

### Smoke Alarm Installation

Hard wired electrical smoke alarms must be installed by a qualified electrical contractor. You can install battery operated alarms yourself.

## **How Many Smoke Alarms are Required?**

A smoke alarm outside each sleeping area with a minimum of one on each level of the house provides a reasonable degree of protection from the threat of fire.

A passageway or corridor between the living areas and the bedrooms is an ideal location. Homes with separate sleeping areas need extra alarms.

Where occupants are heavy sleepers or tend to sleep with bedroom doors closed, a smoke alarm should be installed in each bedroom, particularly if heaters or electrical appliances are used in those rooms.

## **Where is the Best Position for a Smoke Alarm?**

Smoke alarms should be positioned on flat ceilings away from dead corners and at least one metre away from air conditioners or any other fixture which may deflect smoke.

If installed on a wall, the top of the smoke alarm should be located 100mm to 300mm from the ceiling.

*For maximum protection, smoke alarms should be inter-connected so that if one alarm is activated, all the alarms in the building sound a warning.*

## **False Alarms**

To avoid nuisance alarms, standard alarms should not be installed in kitchens or in positions where the normal airflow is through an area where smoke or fumes are generated. Never disconnect the battery to make the alarm inoperable. The operating alarm is usually doing its job and detecting smoke or fumes. If it is too close to the kitchen area, it may need to be relocated.

## **Maintenance of Smoke Alarms**

- 🔊 Smoke alarms may NOT work if they are NOT maintained.
- 🔊 Smoke alarms should be tested at least once a month, by operating the test button.
- 🔊 The grill area of the smoke alarm should be cleaned at least once a year by vacuuming.
- 🔊 In most alarms when the batteries are low, the alarm will regularly sound a short “beep”. This is a reminder to replace the batteries. Batteries should be replaced at least once a year to ensure correct operation. Replace the alarm’s battery back-up in accordance with manufacturers recommendations.

## **What Should I Never Do?**

- 🔔 Never locate an alarm on a wall unless there is no other alternative. If this is the case, then install on a wall at least 300mm and not more than 500mm from ceiling.
- 🔔 Never install alarms within 300mm of adjoining heating/cooling ducts, 300mm of a light fitting (1 metre from fluorescent light) or 900mm off the tip of a ceiling fan's rotating blades.
- 🔔 Never disconnect the battery to overcome nuisance alarms from cooking or smoke from an open fire or wood heater. Instead, install the correct type of alarm or relocate the alarm. In the case of 240 volt alarms, an electrician should be used.
- 🔔 Never install an alarm in a corner where smoke and hot gases cannot accumulate (dead air space). Dead air space exists in corners between the area 300mm across the ceiling and 100mm down the wall.



## **E.D.I.T.H.**

Exit Drills In The Home

### **Plan Your Escape**

When a fire occurs it is too late to plan.

Sit down at the kitchen table with the whole family and make a simple plan for escaping from a fire.

### **Draw a Floor Plan of Your Home**

Plan two ways out of every room, including the bedrooms and the guest rooms.

### **Practice Your E.D.I.T.H.**

First, practice with the lights on at night. Then practice with the lights off.

### **WHY???**

Because it is very hard to see when heavy black smoke is present.

**GET DOWN LOW AND GO, GO, GO**

**STOP DROP AND ROLL**

**GET OUT AND STAY OUT**

## ***Fire Safety Test***

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Smoke Alarms</b>			
Is there a smoke alarm outside the sleeping areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a smoke alarm on every level of the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the battery changed every year and tested each week?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you vacuum the grill of the smoke alarm once a year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Clothes Dryer</b>			
Do you remove lint from the filter regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you ensure it goes through the full cycle including cool down?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Kitchen Safety</b>			
Do you ensure children can't harm themselves on the stove?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the grill catch tray cleaned after use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the appliances clean and regularly maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you store harmful substances in childproof containers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you ensure cooking is never left unattended?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you ensure appliances do not block doorways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a fire extinguisher and/or a fire blanket in your kitchen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you ensure that all pot handles are turned inward?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do cabinets have childproof locks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Continued Overleaf.....*

## ***Fire Safety Test Continued***

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Electrical Safety</b>			
Are your fuses correctly rated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you ensure that power boards are not overloaded with double adaptors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your electrical switches and power points clean and in working order?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have there been electrical safety switches installed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you check that the leads on appliances are in good condition and not frayed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your power points child proof?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Heating</b>			
Are the heaters inspected and cleaned before winter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you put fire screens in front of open fires?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have the chimney checked annually by a chimney sweep?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you dispose of ashes safely?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you use only matches to light a fire (ie. no flammable liquids)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you place clothing a minimum of 1 metre away from heaters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your power lines clear from trees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there adequate clearing around your BBQ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **How Did You Score?**

If you mostly answered “No” to any of these questions, you may need to consider re-evaluating the safety in your home before an emergency occurs.