

# Home safety inspection checklist

## When was the last time your home had a safety checkup?

As a careful consumer, you regularly perform preventive maintenance, including brake, fluid and tire inspections, on your vehicle. Your family frequently visits a doctor for physical examinations, and a dentist for checkups and dental cleaning. You may even take your pet to a veterinarian for an annual checkup and shots. But when was the last time your home had a "safety checkup?"

Not only is your home probably your largest investment, it's also the place where you and your loved ones spend most of your time. You owe it to yourself and your family to schedule and conduct frequent – at least two times per year – home safety inspections. They're easy to do and you may discover a potential fire or electric shock hazard.

The safety experts at Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL), North America's leading product safety certification organization, encourage you to use this handy checklist to conduct a home safety audit.

**Yes**    **No**

Do you read and follow manufacturers' instructions for the products you purchase and use? Do you keep these instructions on file for future reference? Do you consult these instructions before replacing parts, performing authorized maintenance or having products repaired?

## Don't Throw Away Those Installation Instructions or Use and Care Booklets!

Safety in your home is a shared responsibility. Even a UL Listed product that a manufacturer has carefully designed and manufactured can present a safety risk if it is installed, used, maintained or repaired improperly.

Most products are provided with instructions or other information that provides guidance on the proper installation, use and maintenance of the product. When you buy a product, your first step is to thoroughly read these materials – and the product's warning markings – before using the product. Then, keep the instructions on file for reference in case you have questions about the safe use or maintenance of any of the products in your home. It's a good habit to review the instruction manuals periodically.

## Fire Safety

**Yes**    **No**

Do you have working UL Listed smoke alarms installed on each level of your home – including the basement – and outside of each sleeping area?

Do you test and maintain your smoke alarms in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions? Typically, battery-operated alarms should be tested every week; alarms wired into your home's electrical system should be tested monthly.

Do you replace the batteries in your battery operated smoke alarms at least once a year?

Do you have fully charged UL Listed fire extinguishers strategically placed in rooms including the kitchen, garage and workshop? Consult the manufacturer's use and care instructions for placement.

Do you inspect your extinguishers monthly?

Are your extinguishers located in unobstructed areas with their operating instructions (found on the nameplate) facing outward and easily readable? Are the safety seals and tamper indicators intact, not broken or missing? Do you look for obvious physical damage including corrosion, leakage or a clogged nozzle? Is the pressure gauge reader/indicator in the operable range or position? Is the extinguisher full? Consult the manufacturer's instructions for this and other recommended inspection procedures. If your extinguisher doesn't pass inspection, immediately contact a service company for service of rechargeable extinguishers, or discard and replace disposable extinguishers.

 

Have the adults in your household read your extinguisher's instruction manual recently? Review these instructions periodically. Be sure you understand how to properly use the extinguisher and what type and size of fire with which your extinguisher may be used. Not all extinguishers are suitable for use on all types of fires.

## Types of Extinguishers

The label on fire extinguishers includes a letter to indicate on what type of fire the extinguisher may be used. The letters mean:

**Type A** For use on fires involving combustible materials such as wood, cloth and paper

**Type B** For use on flammable liquid fires, including kitchen grease

**Type C** For use on fires involving energized electrical equipment

**Type ABC** Works on all three types of fires listed above Have you established, and does your family practice, a fire escape plan? Remember, if a fire breaks out, no matter how small, your first step is to get everyone out of the house and call the fire department.

Yes No

 

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## Family Fire Escape Plan

**Develop a fire escape plan and practice it regularly.**

Every family member should know at least two ways out of each room. Stay as close to the floor as possible during your escape. Hot air and smoke rise, so the air nearest the floor may be safer to breathe. If you encounter a closed door during your escape, feel the door before opening it. If it's hot, use another exit. The heat could indicate fire on the other side. Teach your children how to escape in case of a fire – not to hide under a bed or in a closet.

Designate a well-lit place, a safe distance from your home, where everyone will meet in the event of a fire. This will help firefighters determine if anyone is still in the burning home. And remember, never return to a burning building for any reason!

## Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Yes No

 

Are your fossil-fuel burning appliances inspected by a qualified service professional at least once a year?

 

Are your fuel-burning appliances properly ventilated?

 

Have you installed working UL Listed carbon monoxide (CO) alarms outside of sleeping areas and near – but at least five feet away from – all fossil fuel-burning appliances in your home?

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you test and maintain your CO alarms as indicated in the manufacturer's instructions? Units wired directly into your home's electrical system should be tested monthly; units operating off a battery should be tested weekly.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you replace the batteries in your battery operated CO alarms at least once a year?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are cleaning chemicals and other substances that could corrupt the sensing device stored at least five feet away from your CO alarms?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you prevent situations that could introduce poisonous CO in your home? Never use charcoal grills inside the home or in an unventilated garage; never allow vehicle exhaust fumes to enter your home; never leave your vehicle running in an unventilated garage; and, never leave a door open between the garage and the home – especially when there is a vehicle with an engine running in the garage. |

### Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas that kills more than 250 people in the United States alone each year. Because you can't hear, taste, see or smell it, it's earned the nickname "the silent killer."

CO is a by-product of incomplete combustion. Sources can include malfunctioning and/or unventilated appliances that operate by burning fossil fuels such as natural or liquefied petroleum (LP) gas, oil, wood, or coal. Other sources include vehicle exhaust, blocked chimney flues, fuel-burning cooking appliances used for heating purposes, and charcoal grills used in the home, tent, camper, garage or other unventilated areas.

#### If your UL Listed CO alarm signals,

- ① Immediately operate the reset/silence button and call your emergency services (fire department or 911).
- ② Move to fresh air – either go outside or move to an open door or window. Check to make sure that everyone in your household is accounted for. Do not reenter the premises nor move away from the open window or door until the emergency services have arrived, the premises have been sufficiently aired out, and your CO alarm remains in its normal condition.
- ③ If your CO alarm reactivates within a 24-hour period, operate the reset button, call your emergency services and move to fresh air. Call a qualified technician to examine and/or turn off your fuel burning appliances or other sources of combustion. If your RV, car or truck is idling in an attached garage, turn off the engine. Although your problem may appear to be temporarily solved, it's crucial that the source of the CO is determined and appropriate repairs are made.

Remember, an alarm indicates elevated levels of CO in your home. CO is called the "silent killer" because it cannot be seen or smelled. Some people can be exposed to dangerous levels of CO and not feel any symptoms. Regardless of whether you feel symptoms, ***never ignore the alarm.***

### Living Areas

Yes      No

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are products being used for their intended purpose? Hair dryers aren't intended to thaw frozen pipes, dry clothing or warm bedding. Ovens aren't intended to heat your home. Misusing a product can pose a serious electric shock or fire risk. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are portable and small appliances and their cords stored out of reach of children? A child could grab a dangling cord and pull the appliance off the sink or countertop. This could damage the product and, more importantly, injure the child. |

Are portable and countertop appliances unplugged when they're not in use? This includes hair dryers, curling irons, shavers, coffee makers, toasters and mixers. When plugged into an outlet, all electrical products can still have dangerous electrical voltages inside them – even when the product is turned off.

 

Do you have ground fault circuit interrupter outlets, also known as GFCIs, installed in the kitchen, bathroom, workshop and laundry rooms?

## About Shock Protection

Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), appliance leakage current interrupters (ALCIs) and immersion detection circuit interrupters (IDCIs) all include features intended to provide protection from injury and electrocution.

GFCIs and ALCIs provide protection against electric shock resulting from ground faults or contact with live parts by a grounded individual. Ground faults can occur when the electrical current in a product strays outside of the path where it should flow. If your body provides a path for the stray current to the ground, you could be injured.

GFCIs may be found built in to an electrical receptacle or as a device that plugs into a receptacle. You can also have a qualified electrician install circuit breaker-type GFCIs (replacements to ordinary circuit breakers) in your home's electrical panels.

IDCIs are intended to safeguard against electric shock resulting from the accidental immersion of electrical products.

Some products, including UL Listed hair dryers manufactured since 1991, are designed with built-in personnel protection devices such as ALCIs or IDCIs. Test and maintain these products according to the manufacturer's instructions. Always read and follow warning markings and safety instructions. And, even if your product is equipped with built-in immersion protection or you have it plugged in to an outlet equipped with a GFCI, keep the product away from water.

## Water and electricity *never* mix!!

Yes No

 

Are appliances, including heaters, lamps, radios, televisions and telephones, stored and used a safe distance away from bathtubs, hot tubs, sinks and swimming pools?

 

Do you do your part to prevent extension cords and product cords from becoming damaged? Never run electrical cords under rugs or over hot or wet surfaces. Never shut doors or windows on cords.

 

Have you inspected your electrical products and their cords and extension cords for broken casings, frayed or broken wires, or other damage? Damaged items should be repaired by a qualified electrician or replaced with new UL Listed products.

 

Have you checked your outlets to make sure you haven't overloaded your household's electrical circuits?

## Avoid Overloading Your Household Electrical Circuits

Yes No

 

With the abundance of new and improved household appliances and products on the market today, it's easy to get carried away purchasing and using these devices. But be careful that you don't overload your household's electrical circuits. Doing so could not only blow a fuse or trip a circuit breaker, it could cause a fire.

 

Never plug appliances that, when their wattage usage is combined, draw more than 1,500 watts from the same circuit. You can find a product's wattage marking on the manufacturer's nameplate or in the use and care booklet. Don't forget to add up the wattage for all the appliances that will be used simultaneously on

a single circuit. Check your circuit breaker/fuse box to determine which outlets are on the same circuit. Remember, there are usually several outlets on the same circuit.

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you have UL Listed fuses or circuit breakers installed in your fuse or circuit breaker box? Do the fuses have the correct current or amp rating? Never replace a fuse with a penny, metal object or another fuse that exceeds the recommended amp rating.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you and all the adults in your home make sure your hands and the floor are dry before touching anything in your fuse or circuit breaker box?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | If your electrical system uses fuses, do you have replacement UL Listed fuses of the correct current or amp rating on hand for emergencies?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you and the adults living in your home know to turn the main power switch off before changing a fuse?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the thermostat on your water heater set to a safe temperature? Consult the manufacturer's instructions and adjust the thermostat according to your family's needs. Although water that is too hot can scald, water that is too cool provides a conducive environment for the growth of dangerous bacteria, including the organism that causes Legionnaire's disease. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are gas cans stored empty and away from sources of combustion? Gas cans are meant for temporary – gas station to engine – use. You should not use these devices to store gasoline or other hazardous chemicals permanently.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you limit your use of extension cords? These devices are intended for occasional use, not for replacing electrical outlets. If you frequently needs to use an extension cord in the same area, have a qualified electrician install a new outlet to avoid constant use of an extension cord.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you using the correct gauge extension cord for a product? UL Listed extension cords bear a marking showing the cord's current carrying capacity, also known as the rating. To verify that an extension cord's rating meets or exceeds the electrical current drawn by the product, consult the product's instruction booklet and markings.                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are extension cords uncoiled when in use? Uncoiling the extension cord may avoid possible overheating.  |

### Are Your Extension Cords Overloaded?

To determine if your extension cord may be overloaded, check the wattage rating marked on the label attached to the cord. Then, add up the wattage rating of all the products plugged into the cord. Wattage ratings or voltage and current ratings (the product of which is the wattage rating) are usually marked on the manufacturer's nameplate or in the use and care booklet.

If the rating marked on the label attached to the extension cord is lower than the total wattage ratings of the products, unplug products until the total wattage of all products plugged into the cord is lower than the extension cord's rating. Exceeding the wattage rating of extension cords could result in overheating and possibly a fire.

**Yes**    **No**

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are portable lamps and fixtures equipped with light bulbs of equal or lower wattage than that recommended by the lamp or fixture's manufacturer? Using a light bulb that is of higher wattage than that recommended by the manufacturer can cause a fire. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | If you own a portable electric air heater, is it used only as a supplementary source of heat? These devices are not intended to replace your home's heating system and they should not be used unless their use is supervised by an adult.                |

- Do you avoid using an extension cord with your air heater? If you must use an extension cord with your heater, it must have a rating 1.25 times the wattage rating of the heater. For example, you must use a cord rated at least 1,875 watts with a 1,500 watt heater.
  - Are portable electric air heaters used a safe distance – at least three feet away – from draperies, furniture, rugs, bedding, clothing and other combustible materials?
  - Do you unplug your heater when it's not in use?
  - Do you inspect the heater and its electrical cord and plug before use? Never use a heater that is damaged.
- Do you keep your heater away from water? Never use a heater where it may fall into a bathtub or other water container.

## Garage Workshop and Yard

Yes No

- If you use extension cords in these areas, are they the heavy-duty, round-type of cord? Check extension cords used outdoors to make sure they are marked "Suitable for use with outdoor appliances – Store indoors when not in use."
- When using power tools, do you use heavy-duty extension cords that have a protection layer of insulation?
- Do you use eye and ear protection and other safety accessories when using power tools such as saws?
- Are your ladders well maintained? Are rungs clean and all parts intact?
- Are wall-mounted controls for automatic garage door operators installed out of childrens' reach? Are portable transmitters kept out of their hands?
- Do you inspect and test your automatic garage door operator monthly?

## Testing Your Garage Operator

Although UL Listed garage door operators manufactured since 1982 have enhanced safety features such as anti-entrapment features, you shouldn't take their safety for granted.

Every month, test the operator's anti-entrapment feature by placing a 1 1/2-inch object, such as a piece of two-by-four lumber flat on the floor in the path of a open door. Activate the door to close. If the door doesn't stop and reverse after contact with the object, disconnect the operator and use the door manually until the operator is replaced or repaired by a qualified technician.

You should also visually inspect the door's springs, rollers and other hardware for breakage or wear. If you see signs of wear or deterioration, contact a qualified technician for repair.

In addition to testing and inspecting your garage door operator, supervise your children and teach them that it's dangerous to activate the door and try and run or ride a bike underneath the door before it closes. Although it may seem to them like a fast and fun way out, it's a deadly game to lose.

If you answered yes to all of these questions, congratulations! Keep up the good work! If you answered no to any of these questions, you owe it to yourself and your loved ones to remove the hazard from your home.

Regardless of your score, biannual home safety audits are just one step. You and your family must always read and follow manufacturer's instructions exactly before using any product. You also need to be constantly aware of the hazards addressed in this brochure and take steps to avoid them in your household.

For more consumer safety information, visit <http://www.ul.com/regulators/pubedu.html>

Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) is an independent, not-for-profit testing and certification organization that has been working for a safer world by evaluating products, materials and systems for more than a century.