

# COMMON FOUNDATIONS

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## Outdoor Safety In Associations

Summer is the peak season for homeowners—barbecues, swimming, ultimate Frisbee tournaments, and relaxing on the front porch. Unfortunately, it's also a time for increased accidents and personal injuries. Most accidents occur at home, including outdoor and association common areas, and too many of them are preventable. This is one of the ways

Start by making safety a priority—take advantage of the warming temperatures and perform a thorough walk-through of all common areas. Chemicals, such as pool chlorine and fertilizers, should be stored in their original containers (to avoid an innocent mix-up) and in a locked common area. Gasoline for power equipment should never be brought indoors—be sure your landscaping crew either stores it in the shed or removes it completely from the premises.

Garages or common storage areas often abound with tripping hazards. All equipment should be unplugged (if reasonable) with the cords curled and

stowed. The light switch in these areas should be located directly within the primary doorway—if not, hire an electrician to install switches at each main entrance.

For all walkways and common stairways, check the stability of the handrails and the condition of the steps and asphalt. Outdoor walkways and parking areas should be well-lighted, with minimal potholes and smooth surfaces. Crumbling steps can easily snag a foot and cause an accident—any walking areas showing disrepair should be fixed immediately!

Barbecue grills are a common safety hazard. When in use, grills should be kept several feet away from siding to prevent a fire or damage to the exterior. Spare gas containers and propane tanks should always be stored outside but never underneath the grill itself, and stored upright.

If your community has a pool, look into laws regarding fences or other barriers; many states require swimming



pools to have a self-latching fence and be enclosed on all four sides. While constant supervision of children in the pool area may be a given, look for the subtler potential danger zones: tables or chairs near the fence (allowing young children to climb over); lack of rescue equipment or it being stored too far away; and the use of air-filled “swimming aids” in place of approved life vests.

This is an ideal time to analyze security measures as well. Do all exterior doors have solid locks, and are they shut at all times? Never allow residents to prop doors open to common areas, as this invites a huge security risk. Are indoor common areas such as lobbies and hallways well-lit and easy to navigate? Are there any dark, isolated areas in the community that are cause for alarm? Also, check for windows that don't shut properly or have broken locks; any means of easy entry is a red flag.

Associations can prevent accidents before they start by involving the entire community in being safe. Flip the page for indoor safety tips that your homeowners can use to keep safe.

### Special Notes on Electrical Safety

- According to the US Fire Administration, home electrical problems annually account for 67,800 fires, 485 deaths, and \$868 million in property losses.
- Home electrical wiring is particularly problematic, and causes twice as many fires as electrical appliances.
- Extension cords should not be used as a permanent solution—only a temporary fix. Consult an electrician to install additional outlets if needed.
- Never force a plug into an outlet, and never remove the third prong to make it fit into a two-prong outlet; these actions could lead to electric shock!

# Homeowner's Room-by-Room Guide to Safety

No concern is too small when it comes to home safety! Being aware of seemingly minor issues can lead to big safety measures your entire family can implement.

Follow this room-by-room safety checklist as you prepare for an active summer.

## **Bathroom**

The smallest room in your house can equal the biggest danger zone for accidents. To minimize the risk in this frequented area, install a bright night light to prevent stumbling in the dark. Electric devices need to be handled with extra care here; consider installing additional outlets equipped with GFCIs (ground fault circuit interrupters) to avoid draping cords across bathroom fixtures.

Install "grab bars" in the shower stall and near the sink or toilet—using towel racks or soap stands for leverage is unsafe and can often lead to personal injury and damaged fixtures. If you have children or pets, use toilet seat locks and cabinet locks for their safety.

## **Kitchen**

The kitchen rivals the bathroom in its potential for accidents. The combination of major appliances, water, and cleaning supplies make precautions in this room a must!

Keep anything that's flammable (such as curtains, cleaning rags, and tablecloths) at least three feet away from your stove. As with the bathroom, the kitchen outlets should be equipped with GFCIs to protect all appliances used in the room. Also, all minor appliances such as the toaster or coffee

pot should be unplugged when not in use. Summertime increases the need for electricity, raising the risk of fire—attention to your home's electric system in general should be part of routine maintenance.

For safer water temperatures, set your hot water heater at 120 degrees F or below. This will prevent scalding from hot water in both the kitchen and bathroom.

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## **Basements and Garages**

Garages and basements are notorious for their clutter and "organized chaos"! A simple set of shelving units can help solve this issue. Store the heaviest items on the ground or on the lower shelf, and keep a

sturdy step-stool in both areas of the house.

In the garage, store children's toys in one specific spot so they aren't tempted to explore in potentially dangerous areas.

## **Living Rooms and Bedrooms**

Smoke and CO detectors should be installed in every bedroom and living room/playroom in the house, as well as near fuel-burning appliances.

Halogen lamps, while convenient for lighting, can be a fire hazard. Place them where children and pets can't knock them over, and in a spot where the bulb will be at least 3 feet from any curtains. If you're concerned about other fire hazards or want more information on safety measures, consider getting a home safety audit by a professional.

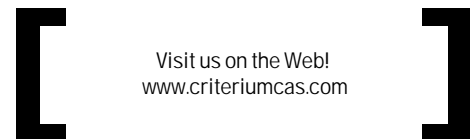
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**1-866-966-1969**

Genevieve Burnell, Editor  
gburnell@criterion-engineers.com



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