



SAFE@HOME

SAFETY MOMENT

Protecting You and Yours In and From Your Home™

DANGERS LURKING IN YOUR HOUSE?

By Randy DeVaul

Whether you own or rent your home, a myriad of hazards lurk around every nook and cranny. Most of the time, it is not a clear and present danger created by or from your home, but from you living in your home.

Hazards range from using oven cleaner or having sharp knives or burning grease in the kitchen to changing a broken light bulb or installing a ceiling fan in the bedroom with the circuit breaker still on to performing a home repair or remodeling job with a power tool we have never used or seen before.

These are but a handful of examples of how we expose ourselves, our family, and our pets to harmful substances or situations in our home. Then there is the garage or storage shed – pesticides, fertilizers, gasoline, antifreeze, brake fluid, aerosol sprays, paint, paint thinners – all stored together and ready to take out the whole neighborhood with the strike of a match or a leaking container.

So what options do you have to be safe at home? Well, you can move in with your neighbor or your in-laws so it's not your house, but then you have even less control over the existing hazards. Try living in your van, but then you have air quality issues from both the inside of the van and the outside of you that will kill your social life. Your best option is to protect yourself from you. Do that by not creating the hazard in the first place.

For example, turn off the circuit breaker before changing a cover switch or plate. Meal time should not include burnt offerings to unknown deities or family members from leaving items unattended while cooking or baking. Clean out the lint trap in the dryer before collecting enough

to knit a sweater. Don't use lighter fluid to get a quicker start on your wood in your fireplace.

These examples are not funny. People are killed or seriously injured every year through taking shortcuts or unknowingly placing themselves in danger. According to the National Safety Council, over 6,000 people die every year just from falls in and around the home. Over 130,000 each year suffer disabling or life-changing injuries from falling off real or makeshift ladders.

According to the US Fire Administration, more people die in fires than in hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and all other natural disasters combined! These fires are not from house defects. Instead, they are from people placing heaters too close to other things that can burn, lit cigarettes or ashes on furniture or in the trash, or overloading wall outlets, just to name a few.

With almost 25 years in emergency response services and in occupational safety, I have seen life-altering injuries occur because people take shortcuts or make bad choices.

Starting today, make the right choice. Your home is your safe haven. Don't make it your personalized killing machine. Keep yourself and your family safe, healthy, and well through being 'safe at home.'