



## New Homeowner Safety Checklist

Congratulations on the purchase of your new home! Now that you have moved in, you should consider these safety tips and suggestions to make your house your home.

### SAFETY

**Doors** – Change the locks on all exterior entrances. Make extra sets of keys. An outside “hide-a-key” stash can be a lifesaver – just be a little craftier than leaving a key under the door mat.

**Windows** – Check that all windows are secure. Improve window hardware as needed. Security rods can be added to sliding windows and doors.

**Tripping Hazards** – Undertake improvements to all stairways, porches, landings, decks, walkways and driveways where there is a risk of falling or stumbling. Examine interior flooring for similar tripping hazards (e.g. loose carpet, buckled linoleum) and make repairs where necessary.

**Smoke Detectors** – Install smoke detectors on each level of the home and especially in & near all sleeping areas. Replace batteries on any existing smoke detectors and test them. Remember to replace batteries and test the detector at least annually.

**Carbon Monoxide Detectors** – Protect yourself and your family from the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in America. Install detectors on each level of the home and especially near all sleeping areas. Replace batteries annually and replace detectors altogether as recommended by the manufacturer.

**Emergency Evacuation Plan** – Create a plan of action in the event of a fire or earthquake impacting your home. Ensure there is an operable window or door in every room of the house. Provide rope or ladders for escaping upper floors. Make sure all family members know what to do and where to meet up once outside the house.

**Fire Extinguishers** – Purchase general-purpose fire extinguishers for each floor of the home plus have one small kitchen extinguisher in case of a grease fire.

**Basic Household Tools** – Create a toolbox with basic tools (hammer, screwdrivers, saw, wrenches, pliers, tape measure, electric drill & bits) to help you with normal maintenance chores. Don't forget a supply of nails, wire, screws/nuts, duct tape, and shop rags.

**KNOW YOUR HOUSE** – Basic knowledge of key systems in your house is important for your safety, for the proper functioning of the system and for ensuring that these systems last as long as they should.

**Furnace** – Where is it? What kind of fuel does it use? How often should you clean or replace filters? Where do you get new filters and how do you install? How often should you have it professionally serviced? If you have an oil furnace you need to arrange for refilling as needed. If the furnace stops working you need to know how to restart or who to call.



**Water Heater** – Does it have a pilot light? What if it goes out – how do you relight it? How do you set the temperature? What temperature should you set it to?

Know the age and life expectancy of your water heater and keep tabs on it as it gets near the end of its expected life. It's easier and cheaper to replace a water heater before it goes completely kaput.

**Fireplace Flu** – If you use a wood burning fireplace it is important to have the flu cleaned every few years. If/when the fireplace is not in use close the damper to keep warm air in and cold air out. Install a chimney cap if you don't have one to better protect the flu.

**Gutters** – Clean, well sloped gutters are vital for moving rainwater to your storm drain system (and away from your house). Check your gutters at least annually to ensure they are ready to do their job.

**Pilot Lights** – Many older gas appliances and most water heaters have a small continuously burning gas flame – the pilot light – that ignites the main burner. Some newer models have electronic igniters. To be safe, you should: know which appliances have a pilot light; know how to relight any pilot light in accordance with manufacturer's instructions; know where these instructions are (often they are located inside main burner compartment door. If you cannot relight the pilot light yourself, call your local utility and ask for assistance.

**KNOW YOUR VALVES** – Determine the location of all the shut-off valves in your house and make sure family members know how to shut them off in case of emergency.

**Gas** – Locate and show entire family how to turn off. Also know the correct wrench necessary to turn off the gas and leave it in a handy place.

**Electrical Panel** – Label the main circuit breaker and show the family how to shut off the main breaker in case of emergency.

**Whole-house Water Shutoff** – Locate the valve that is connected to the main water line coming in from the street. Also, locate the water meter as the valve there can be turned off as well. If you are served by a well, the shutoff should be on the house side of the pressure tank. You should also determine how to cut power to the tank.

**Whole-house Hot Water Shutoff** – There should be a valve on the hot water outlet of the water heater which controls all the hot water to the house.

**Toilet & Sink Shutoffs** – There are oval handles (behind the toilet and under the sink counter) that control the water flow to these devices. Turn them off if there is ever a system failure (overflowing/running toilet, leaking faucet valve).

**Dishwasher Shutoff** – Under the kitchen sink should be a reducer coupling and shut-off valve that controls the water flow to the dishwasher.

**Washing Machine** – Valves are usually where the washer hoses meet the house supply lines. Washer hoses are notoriously weak, so consider changing them routinely.