



The Bonner County Safety Record

All the News that is Safe to Print

March 1, 2017
Edition 26

Home Safe Home

Our homes are more than just houses or apartments. We spend a large portion of our time there, they hold our valued possessions and they protect our loved ones from harm. A safe home is psychologically important as well. This edition of the Bonner County Safety Record shares some tips to help you make your House a Home-Safe-Home.

Here is a list of the five most common security threats and recommended solutions:

1. Burglary

A home is burglarized every 20 seconds in the United States, which comes at a great cost to homeowners and insurers — the average loss totals \$2,316. And most stolen possessions are unlikely to be recovered as only about 13 percent of reported burglaries are solved.

A home without a security system is 300% more likely to be broken into. A security system may seem like a hefty investment, but many insurance companies will give a discount for a home with an alarm system. Homeowners can choose a security system without a monthly fee or even a DIY security system.

Basic burglar proofing will also deter criminals. Put window bars on the base of all window frames to prevent them from being opened from the outside, install a heavy-duty dead bolt lock on every door that leads outside, and trim landscaping around doors and windows so potential intruders can't hide.

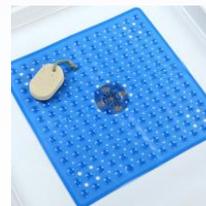
2. Poisoning

The National Safety Council reports that 90 percent of poisonings happen at home and are the leading cause of unintentional death. The most common type of poisoning is overdosing from prescription drugs, especially painkillers. Daily, over 50 people die from opioid pain medications and over 150 children go to the emergency room for ingesting medicines.

Another threat to be aware of is carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide (CO) gas is known as the silent, invisible killer because it is undetectable without equipment — it is odorless, colorless and tasteless. Annually in the United States, unintentional CO poisoning causes more than 20,000 emergency room visits, 4,000 hospitalized patients, and more than 400 deaths.

Only a CO detector can identify this toxic gas, it is important to install one on every level of a home and in areas with CO-producing equipment and appliances, like the garage and kitchen.

Home Safety Scavenger hunt. How many of these items can you find in your home?





The Bonner County Safety Record

3. Fires

All the News that is Safe to Print

March 1, 2017
Edition 26 Page 2

Home fires are so alarming because they start quickly and quietly: [The Department of Homeland Security](#) reports that fires can become life-threatening in a mere two minutes, and a home can be fully engulfed in flames in just five. According to the [National Fire Protection Association](#) (NFPA), seven people die from home fires every day, half of them in fires that start between eleven o'clock at night and seven o'clock in the morning.

Though cooking equipment is the leading cause of home fire injuries, smoking materials are the primary cause of home fire deaths. Fires aren't just quarantined to the kitchen area: 25 percent of home fire deaths result from fires that start in a bedroom and 25 percent are from fires that start in a living room, family room, or den.

A smoke detector is one of the best fire prevention tools. According to the NFPA, 60 percent of home fire deaths happen in homes with no working smoke alarm. Like a CO detector, a smoke detector should be installed on every floor of a home, in each bedroom, and in the attic.

Also keep a fire extinguisher on every floor of the house, including one near the kitchen. An extinguisher can quickly stop a small fire from spreading, so make sure family members know how to [properly use it](#). Make sure to check the batteries in all smoke detectors and the expiration date on any fire extinguishers every year.

It is also important to form an escape plan in case a fire starts when family members are home and to run through it twice a year. Remember that if a smoke alarm goes off, get out of the home immediately. The heat and smoke can be toxic and disorient residents, which is why practicing an escape is critical.

4. Natural Disasters

No matter where you live, most residents are probably at risk for some type of natural disaster. Whether it is floods, earthquakes, wildfires, tornadoes or hurricanes, it is important to be prepared to handle a variety of perils. Even if you don't live in Tornado Alley or an earthquake zone, severe weather accounts for three of the five most common home insurance claims [according to Zillow](#). Wind and hail top the list, followed by water damage, freezing and lightning.

Natural disasters are often covered by supplemental insurance policies, especially if you live in an area at high risk of a specific disaster — so check with your insurance provider. Prepare your family by putting together a 72-hour emergency preparedness kit with things you'll need if you have to leave your home in a hurry.

You'll also want to develop an emergency communication plan with your family in case a natural disaster makes it difficult to reach each other at work or school. [FEMA](#) recommends collecting vital contact information for each family member and including the phone numbers of medical facilities, schools, doctors and workplaces. Keep a hard copy of this list at home and work.



5. Falls

Falling is a common household hazard: [one in three older adults](#) will fall each year, one in five falls results in a broken bone or a head injury, and [nearly three million older people](#) visit the emergency room as a result of a fall.

There are things we can do to help prevent falls. Being physically active is the most critical. Strong muscles can improve balance and help expedite recovery time. Regular eye exams, limited alcohol use, blood pressure checks, and solid shoes that surround your foot can also help.

To [help prevent falls](#), eliminate clutter around the home — especially toys and loose electric cords. Secure all floor rugs and place night-lights in bathrooms, halls and the kitchen. Be mindful of the bathroom and its slippery shower and bathtub, since this is where many falls occur. Put non-skid mats in the bath and shower and install handlebar grips in the shower and around the toilet.

Walk through your home on a regular basis to see if it is vulnerable to any of these threats. Many of these solutions are fairly simple, but they can save time to implement safety strategies that will keep your home as safe and secure as possible.

Sage Singleton is a home and community safety expert for [SafeWise](#). She has written for a variety of audiences ranging from government sites to lifestyle magazines. She can be reached at sage.singleton@safewise.com.