

Safety Topic of the Month

Spring Cleaning Safety

Info taken from The National Safety Council and SafeWise

Spring is a wonderful time to work and play outside and check items off your home to-do list. Unfortunately, spring also ushers in its own challenges and unique safety issues. By maintaining vigilance and caution, you can stay safe and healthy and cruise into summer concussion- and cast-free.

Before You Get Started:

Take It Slow

Digging, planting, mowing, and trimming can be surprisingly strenuous after a winter of inactivity, so minimize your chances of limping back into the house. Stretch before vigorous activity, lift with your legs, use well-maintained tools, and break up heavy loads into multiple trips.

Dress the Part

Depending on the activity you will be participating in, make sure you're using the proper safety equipment: wear safety goggles, sturdy shoes, and long pants, as well as gloves and ear protection if necessary.

Inside Your Home:

Replace Your Filters

Indoor air can be up to five times more polluted than outdoor air — especially during the winter when we trap our indoor air inside with us. To help improve your indoor air quality, air out your house while spring cleaning, and clean or replace the filters on your air conditioning unit and furnace, as well as your dryer, vacuum, range hood, and refrigerator.

Test the Batteries in Your Smoke Detectors

Test each smoke detector individually. Ask someone to stand as far away as possible from the detector you are testing — it's vital that your family can hear every detector from anywhere in the house. If it doesn't let out an alarm loud enough for your assistant to hear, change the batteries and test it again. If it still doesn't work, replace the detector.

Review (or Create) Your Family Emergency Plan

Take advantage of the new season by reviewing your disaster preparedness plan with every member of your household and update it to reflect anything that may have changed in the last year. Your plan should include at least two rendezvous points, an emergency contact person, and an evacuation route. Once you have reviewed the plan, run a few drills for the natural disasters that can occur in your area, like fire, flooding, and earthquake.

Clean Out the Medicine Cabinet

Properly dispose of all expired and unused medications in your home. Many medications are considered too dangerous to throw away or flush down the toilet, so call your pharmacy or local poison control center to find any drop-off sites that will take your expired medications.

Update Your First Aid and 72-Hour Kits

Check your first aid kit and 72-hour kit and replace any missing or expired items. Make sure you have all the essentials, including bandages, water, and emergency phone numbers for the local poison control center and your family physician.

Check Your Fire Extinguishers

Every home should have at least one fire extinguisher in an easy-to-access location. Although fire extinguishers can have a long shelf life, they do eventually expire — and once they do, they are useless in a fire. Make sure you check the expiration date on your fire extinguishers and keep them updated.

Secure Your Home

If you have a security system, you may want to make a call to your security company to check if there are any updates or changes to your system you should be aware of. If your house isn't safeguarded with a security system, make time during your spring cleaning to find a reliable security company that works for you and your family.

Outside Your Home:

Check Your Pipes

Turn your sprinklers back on, but watch out for cold spring nights that may cause frozen pipes — or pipes that froze during the winter without you realizing it.

Get Your Yard Ready

Trim back dead trees and shrubs before they can fall and cause injuries and any branches that have grown too close to electrical wiring. Clear overgrown plants from walkways and reposition any dislodged stepping stones or other garden decorations to avoid tripping hazards.

Clean Out Chimneys and Gutters

Cleaning your chimney will help reduce the risk of fire as well as carbon monoxide buildup. This same principle goes for your roof gutters: not only is debris buildup a fire hazard, but if your area is prone to rainfall, dirty gutters can be a flooding hazard as well.

Watch Out for Pests

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), thousands of people are stung by bees and other insects each year. These can range from minor irritations to serious allergic reactions and even death. If you get stung or bitten, stay calm and treat the area immediately. Seek medical attention if the site gets red and swollen or if you have trouble breathing.

Stay Safe on the Road

Spring showers don't just bring May flowers, they also make the roads slick and potentially treacherous. Warmer weather also means more cyclists and children playing outside, increasing the need for driver diligence. To keep yourself and others safe on the road, schedule a vehicle maintenance check to ensure tires, wipers, and brakes are functioning properly.