



# SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with  
National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World  
and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service

## Leader Training Guide

# Be Safe

*(Secure and Free Experience)*

### Objectives:

1. This lesson is designed to assist seniors to **Be Safe** in their homes.
2. Seniors should be **secure** knowing that they are **free** from hazards and that living at home results in a healthy and happy **experience**.

### Introduction:

Americans are living longer today than ever. In addition many senior Americans continue to live at home, often alone well into their eighties and some into their nineties. While on one hand this is a remarkable success story, on the other hand it could be a tragedy waiting to happen. It is common knowledge that as people age their motion or manner of walking begins to change. A young person may trip but can easily correct the stumble and prevent a fall. But, as one grows older, the ability to correct the stumble and prevent falls diminishes. If an older person trips over a rug, or some other simple household object, they end up falling most of the time.

Older people also tend to have problems with their eyesight thus the need for well lit and clutter free homes. In addition to stumbling, injury can occur with seniors because of the inability to see well.

Studies show that 80 percent of all accidents involving people over 50 occur in the home. It is also documented that 20 percent of these seniors die from complications resulting from injuries and hospitalization.

### Suggested Program Ideas:

1. Give copies of Handouts to members. Ask them to point out safety hazards in their homes, places where they have fallen (or have almost fallen), or where they know of others having fallen in homes.
2. Discuss other options of reducing the safety hazards in homes.
3. Discuss the costs in South Carolina of some of the safety adaptations suggested to reduce hazards. Compare cost of adaptations to the costs of medical bills and rehabilitation due to injuries.



## Take the Home Safe Test

**✓ YES!**

	Is there a smoke detector near the kitchen and bedroom areas?
	Is the entrance to your home well lit at night?
	Are there emergency numbers near all phones at all times?
	Is there non-slip flooring in the bathroom and kitchen?
	Are electrical outlets <u>not</u> overloaded?
	Does someone always know where you are?
	Are your walls painted a light color?
	Is there a grab bar near the tub?
	Are nightlights used when it gets dark?
	Are traffic areas of the home clutter free?

If you could not answer yes to all these questions, then there are some very important safety adaptations that need to be made to your home. Lets travel through your home and look at ways your home can become a place where you will **Be Safe**.



## Safe Entrance

When you drive up to your home what do you see? Is the driveway safe and free from debris that could cause a fall or damage to your car? Is it well lit and are the steps into the house in good repair? Take a minute to look around the entrance and observe the following Safe Tips that could prevent falls when entering and leaving the house as well as providing safety from intruders.

**✓ YES!**

	Stairs are easy to maneuver and safe.
	A handrail is attached to the outdoor steps.
	The walkway or drive joining the steps is level and free from clutter.
	The area is well lit at night.
	Shrubs and trees are trimmed for safety.
	A ramp is available for those incapable of using the steps.
	The door is easy to open and easy to lock.
	A window is available near the back to door in order to see visitors before the door is opened.
	Outdoor light switches are easily accessible for the control of outdoor lights.
	Motion detector lights are installed for added safety.
	Never stand in chairs to reach out of the way items. If you must locate a hard to reach item, always use a sturdy step stool. (Remember it's always a good idea to wait until someone else can help you.)



## A Safe Kitchen

The kitchen is usually the heart of the home. More time is spent in the kitchen than any other room in the house except for perhaps the bedroom. For this reason it is very important to make sure the kitchen is as safe as possible. Check your kitchen against the safety tips listed here.

### ✓ YES!

	Install a smoke detector close to the kitchen, but not in the kitchen.
	Place a fire extinguisher near the kitchen.
	Use only non-slip rugs and mat in front of the sink and other areas.
	Make sure the kitchen is well lit. If lights are burned out, have them replaced or add additional lights if needed.
	Place regularly used items in cabinets that are low and reachable. If possible make contents in kitchen cabinets more accessible with inexpensive slide out shelves, removable sliding and hanging baskets, lazy Susan turntables and swing out storage units.
	Never stand in chairs to reach out of the way items. If you must locate a hard to reach item, always use a sturdy step stool. (Remember it's always a good idea to wait until someone else can help you.)
	Have a multi-use "reacher" handy to help in taking down lightweight items from upper shelves or picking up dropped items.
	Make sure outlets in the kitchen are not overloaded. Install new outlets or purchase a UL listed outlet extender with circuit breaker.
	Remove clutter from kitchen to make room for needed items so that everything can be within easy reach.
	Purchase easy to use can openers to prevent cuts from jagged cans.
	Do not put knives loose in drawers. Protect yourself from potential cuts by using knife guards.
	Never leave grease cooking unattended and clean grease from burner pans and stove regularly.
	Use a long handled dustpan and brushes to clean up floor with out having to bend over.
	Install lever-type faucet handles. If changing hardware is too expensive, buy a gripper tab turner that will fit over existing faucets converting standard faucets into lever type faucets.
	Make sure your iron, toaster oven or other heat producing appliances include an automatic shut off feature device or purchase a separate shut off device and attach it to the appliance.



# The Safe Bathroom

Bathrooms could be an accident waiting to happen. Look through your bathroom and compare our safety tips with those available in your home.

## ✓ YES!

	Install a grab bar within easy reach of tub and toilet. Grab bars should be secured into wall studs or a wall backed with wood blocking for additional safety.
	If wall mounted grab bars are difficult to install, purchase an adjustable safety rail that clamps onto the edge of any bathtub to provide steady handhold when rising from or lowering into the tub.
	Use textured tape in a contrasting color at the threshold of the shower to mark the potential safety hazard of a raised area.
	Hang a vertical mirror at the counter top level of the bathroom vanity to allow the mirror to be used while a person is standing or sitting.
	Installing a wall mounted, extending magnifying mirror near the vanity will allow a person to shave or perform other personal grooming tasks while sitting.
	Install additional lights if needed.
	Make sure only non-slip floor mats are used in the bathroom. Also when it's time to replace the flooring consider rubber flooring. This flooring is less slippery and much quieter.
	Adjust hot water heater to prevent burns and scalds.
	Install hand-held shower if needed.
	Add non-slip mats to shower or tub.
	If needed, add seat extenders to toilet to raise the height for the person who finds a standard toilet difficult to use.



# Safety in the Bedroom

The bedroom is another critical area for focusing on senior's safety. Observe your bedroom and decide how it stacks up against our safety suggestions.

## ✓ YES!

	Install smoke detectors near the bedroom area. (Most fatal home fires occur between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM while people are sleeping.)
	Buy a mattress with fire retardant foam and fire retardant blankets. (Invest in fire-resistant bedding available in your area.)
	Relocate bedroom to first floor if you are presently sleeping in an upstairs room.
	Use a night-light to provide a lighted path from the bedroom to the bathroom.
	Clear the path from the bedroom to the bathroom of any obstacles that you may trip over during the night.
	Make sure the lamp and telephone are within reach of your bed.
	Keep a flashlight near by in case of an emergency.
	Install a personal response system that would allow you to call for help if you needed it.
	When it's time to replace carpet consider a dense level loop carpet glued directly to the floor rather than deep heavy pile carpeting.
	Avoid using throw rugs, a source of slips, trips and falls.
	Outfit bedroom closets with multilevel shelving, hanging bars and baskets to make contents more accessible.



# The Rest of the House

Truly, the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom are some of the more common areas for safety issues. However, there are basic things that can be simply done in the rest of the house to insure your house is as safe as possible.

## ✓ YES!

	Brighten up the walls by painting them light colors. Light colors will help with visibility and reduce falls.
	Keep magnifying glass by telephone book and in kitchen.
	Remove throw rugs that could cause falls.
	Evaluate furnishings in various rooms. Often people will trip over low pieces such as coffee tables.
	Make sure stairs are well lit.
	Use proper window treatments at night to avoid others from seeing inside your home.
	Control glare from sunlight with proper window treatment such as mini-blinds and draperies.
	Install handrails along walls in the hall.
	Keep emergency phone numbers clearly written in large type near all phones.
	Provide shelves convenient to washing machine and dryer.
	Always let someone know where you are going and when your return home.
	Have contact with neighbors and family members every day.



# A Safe Summary

We hope that you have gained insights into ways to make your home a place where you can **Be Safe**. It's not our intention for you to feel like you must invest in all these ideas we have shared. Instead, we would expect that as you need to purchase and replace items in your home that you would consider these suggestions. We trust that you will be **secure** in your home and your home will be **free** from hazards and will provide you a healthy and happy **existence**. We want you to be safe.

*Source: Adapted by Leslee Spivey (Retired County Agent) and Nancy M. Porter, Ph.D., Extension Family Resource Management Specialist, Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service, from "131 Ideas from The Hartford House."*

