



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
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

Leader Training Guide

Environmental Safety and Hazards

Objectives:

Establish an awareness of the space we may find ourselves in.
Identify common steps to avoid identified hazards.
Provide safety tips for indoors and outdoors.

Lesson Introduction:

Regardless of where we go, we are surrounded by hazards. Hazards are any potentially harmful object or condition of which we are not aware. Whether inside or outside, we should take time to inspect our environment. Even if we work or live in a fairly clean environment, we may be exposed to harmful substances. Many harmful chemicals are used in household cleaning, in farming, in food production and in manufacturing consumer goods. Most accidents happen inside the home and most can be prevented with a little foresight. Be Safe! Avoid accidents.

Lesson:

Indoors

Survey the area around you. Check for adequate lighting conditions for all areas.

Stairs: Begin by checking the spacing between steps; unequal spacing can contribute to falls. Make sure the entire stairway is clear including the landing areas. Make sure stairs are equipped with handrails and that they are at a comfortable height. Stairs should be equipped with a non-slip surface. They should be well lit with a light switch at the top and bottom. Rugs at the top and bottom of the stairs should have non-slip backing. Edges of all steps should be clearly visible. When using the stairs, take your time. Don't carry items that will block your view of the stairs or prevent you from holding the handrail. Remove reading glasses or those prescribed for distances.

Ramps and Inclines: Ramps should be stable, firm and slip-resistant. Water should not accumulate on the approach or surfaces of the ramp and landing. Hand rails are required for most ramps.

Platforms and stages: Guard rails and hand rails can prevent falls from stages. Rails should be secure and solid. A platform without rails is an accident waiting to happen. Don't forget that safety requires being aware of your surroundings. Slick surfaces are a significant hazard.

Floors: Check floors for safety. Unsecured rugs, wet floors, cluttered paths, electrical cords, high door thresholds can lead to falls.

Wall and Glass: Regular glass is extremely dangerous because it can break into jagged pieces that can cause serious injury. Safety glass is now a requirement in new buildings and homes. If you discover broken glass, don't pick it up by hand; sweep it carefully into a dustpan and place the pieces in a metal container, not a plastic garbage bag. You can also wrap glass securely in newspaper and place in a box.

Exits: Do you pay attention to the exits in a building? If an emergency occurred, would you know how to find another exit if a particular exit is blocked?

How safe are public restrooms?

Did you know that faucet handles in public restrooms can hold up to 50,000 germs per square inch? However, thorough hand washing with soap will remove up to 95% of bacteria and viruses. It is best to use anti-bacterial sanitizer only after hand washing. Avoid using wet soap bars, because stagnant water can harbor bacteria. Always rinse the soap bar for 30 seconds. Be aware that you can pick up colds, flu, and intestinal viruses from contaminated surfaces. When touching handles, lids or tampon receptacles, wrap your hand with tissue as a precaution or use your feet. When using a toilet seat, wiping it with a tissue or using provided seat covers offers protection. According to Philip Tierno, the author of "the Secret Life of Germs", it is practically impossible to be infected by sexually transmitted diseases from previous users. Studies have shown that the first stall is the cleanest because it gets less use; for the same reason, it also usually has toilet paper. Don't use exposed toilet paper. Use the pieces from within the dispenser, because it hasn't been exposed to any germs. When using your bathroom at home, lower the lid before flushing. Failure to do so causes bacteria to spray out into the air. Since there is no lid in a public toilet, flush and exit quickly. Washing hands is excellent protection against disease transmission. For best results, use warm water to moisten your hands and then apply soap and rub your hands together for 20 seconds. Rinse thoroughly to rid yourself of soil and reduce the germs. Repeat the process when possible. Use single-use paper towels from the dispenser or use air dryers but avoid touching the dryer grates.

Sharp Objects and Snags

- Sharp objects should only be used for their intended purpose. Incorrectly using sharp objects and disposing of them incorrectly can cause serious harm.

Outdoors

Flower Beds and Borders: Survey the area carefully. Are there flower beds or borders? They can become a tripping hazard. Elevation changes also can present problems. Be sure to look ahead as you walk. Elevation changes can cause loss of balance.

Curbs are not always even and can also cause tripping.

- Walking Trails and Paths: Trees and bushes cannot be trusted as supports. Stay on developed pathways and trails. Watch your footing in solid rock areas. Use a walking stick; it can serve for

support or as a defense against animals. Travel with a companion when possible. Be in reasonably good physical condition before going out alone. Wear appropriate clothing for the trail conditions and season. Pay attention to current and predicted weather conditions. Be aware of the contour of the land and of rocks and muddy areas. Be on the alert for slippery conditions and take your time. Leaves can hide slippery surfaces underneath. Low hanging branches and variable terrains can make running and walking unsafe. Watch out for sharp objects, broken glass, fallen branches and for large ant hills, bees, hornets, wasps, yellow jackets which can cause problems in many outdoor areas. Avoid attracting stinging insects by wearing light colored clothing and avoid wearing perfumes or colognes. If an insect approaches, don't wave wildly and swat blindly. Use a gentle brushing or pushing motion. If you are allergic, carry an epi pen. Never feed wild animals. Familiarize yourself with poison ivy and other dangerous plants common to the area. If you contact a poisonous plant, immediately wash the affected area with water and apply a soothing lotion or calamine lotion directly to the affected area.

Lesson Summary:

This lesson is not all inclusive. As we move from place to place we learn more about looking for potential hazards. Learning as much as possible about a particular area in advance can help you avoid injuries. Be Safe

Suggested Activities:

Ask participants to share their safety measures for indoors and outdoors.

Suggested Materials:

Provide copies of "A Household safety check list" list to participants (see attached pages). Ask them to review the list and add additional items.

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Lesson Review: Dr. Susan Barefoot, Extension Food Safety & Nutrition Program Team Leader

Sources/References:

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- Environmental Illness - Toxic Chemicals in Our Environment. WebMD
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- Poisoning www.who.int/environmental_health_emergencies/poisoning/en/
- <http://www.cookeryonline.com>
- What you can catch in restrooms: Bathroom paranoia. WebMD
<http://www.webmd.com/balance/features/what-can-you-catch-in-restrooms?pagenumber=2>
- Sarah D. Kirby. A Household Safety Checklist. North Carolina Cooperative Extension.
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/pdfs/FCS-461.pdf>

General Safety

- _____ Emergency numbers and your address are posted by each telephone.
- _____ Telephones are located in each room. They can be reached from the floor in case of a fall.
- _____ Inside and outside door handles and locks are easy to operate.
- _____ Doors have lever-action handles instead of round knobs.
- _____ Door thresholds are low and beveled or there are no thresholds.
- _____ Windows open easily from the inside, but they have a secure locking system that can prevent someone from entering from the outside.
- _____ The water heater thermostat is set at 120 degrees F or lower to prevent accidental scalding.
- _____ Medications are stored in a safe place according to instructions on the label of the package or container.
- _____ Carpeting and rugs are not worn or torn.
- _____ Small, loose rugs have non-skid backing and are not placed in traffic areas of the home.
- _____ Appliances, lamps, and cords are clean and in good condition.
- _____ There are no exposed, glaring bulbs in lamps or fixtures.
- _____ All electrical equipment bears the Underwriters laboratories (UL) label.
- _____ Outlets are located where they are needed in every room.
- _____ Electrical overload protection is provided by circuit breakers, fuses, or ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI). GFCIs prevent electrical shock and are particularly important in areas where water is used, such as kitchens, bathrooms, and outside.
- _____ Electrical service has enough capacity to serve the house and is up to code. (You can call your municipal electrical inspector or a reputable electrical contractor to check the wiring in your house.)
- _____ Extension cords do not carry more than their proper load as indicated on the cord or appliance.
- _____ Electrical cords are placed out of the flow of traffic and out from underneath rugs and furniture.
- _____ Smoke alarms are present in the home and are in working order. One way to help you remember to change the batteries is to replace them on your birthday—don't forget to mark it on your calendar.

Kitchen

- _____ The range and sink areas have adequate light levels.
- _____ If you have a gas range, it is equipped with pilot lights and an automatic cut-off in the event of flame failure. (Your local utility service representative can check this for you.)
- _____ The range is not where curtains might fall onto a burner.
- _____ If you have an exhaust hood for the oven, it has easily removable filters for proper cleaning. Clean filters as needed.
- _____ The kitchen exhaust system is internally vented, discharges directly outside, or discharges through ducts to the outside and not into the attic or other unused space.
- _____ Countertop space lets you keep carrying and lifting to a minimum.
- _____ Kitchen wall cabinets are not too high to be easily reached.
- _____ Lighting of counter tops is enough for meal preparation.
- _____ Light switches are located near the doors
- _____ Shiny or glaring work surfaces are not used.
- _____ Oven controls are clearly marked and easily grasped.
- _____ Oven controls are located on the front or side of the oven, so that you don't have to reach over the burners.
- _____ A single-lever mixing faucet is used. This type of faucet controls both the hot and cold water flow with a single control.
- _____ Flooring is not slippery and has a non-glare surface.
- _____ When cooking, pan handles are turned away from other burners and the edge of the range.
- _____ When cooking, you do not wear garments with long, loose sleeves.
- _____ Hot pads and pan holders are kept near the range.
- _____ If you have a microwave, it is operated only when there is food in it.
- _____ Small appliances are unplugged when not in use.
- _____ Knives are kept in a knife rack or drawer.
- _____ Countertops and work areas are cleared of all unnecessary objects.
- _____ Drawers and cupboards are kept closed.
- _____ A sturdy, stable stepladder or step stool is used rather than a chair to reach objects in overhead cabinets.
- _____ Grease or liquid spills are wiped up at once.

Source: "A Household Safety Checklist" NC Cooperative Extension, FCS 461

Stairways and Halls

- _____ Steps are in good condition and are free of objects.
- _____ Steps have non-skid strips. Carpeting on steps is securely fastened and free of fraying or holes.
- _____ Smoke detectors are in place in hallways and near sleeping areas.
- _____ Hallways are equipped with night-lights.
- _____ Sturdy handrails are on both sides of stairway and are securely fastened.
- _____ Light switches are located at the top and bottom of stairways and at both ends of long hallways.
- _____ Inside doors do not swing out over stair steps.
- _____ There is enough space in the stairway to avoid bumping your head.
- _____ Room entrances do not have raised door thresholds.
- _____ It is easy to see the leading edge or nosing of each stair tread while walking down stairs.
- _____ Stairways and hallways are well lighted.

Living Room

- _____ Electrical cords are placed along walls (not under rugs) and away from traffic areas.
- _____ Chairs and sofas are sturdy and secure.
- _____ Chairs and sofas are not too low or too deep to get in and out of easily.
- _____ Chairs and sofas have full arms to aid in sitting or rising.
- _____ The light switch is located near the entrance.
- _____ There is enough space to walk through the room leaving clear passageways for traffic.
- _____ Furniture, which might be used for support when walking or rising, is steady and does not tilt.

Bathroom

- _____ The bathtub or shower has a non-skid mat or strips on the standing area.
- _____ Bathtub or shower doors are safety glass or plastic.
- _____ Grab bars are installed on the walls by the bathtub and toilet.
- _____ The towel bars and the soap dish in the shower stall are durable and are firmly installed.
- _____ A single-lever mixing faucet is used, or you have faucet handles that are easy to grasp.

- _____ Bathroom flooring is matte-finished, textured tile, or low pile commercial carpet (no throw rugs or bathmats).
- _____ Bathroom has even lighting without glare. The light switch is near the door.
- _____ The bathroom door opens outward.
- _____ The bathroom has a safe supplemental heat source and ventilation system.
- _____ The outlets are ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) that protect against electric shock.

Bedroom

- _____ A lamp or flashlight is kept within reach of your bed. Check batteries periodically to make sure they are working, and keep a spare package of batteries nearby.
- _____ A night-light is used to brighten the way to the bathroom at night.
- _____ Plenty of room is left for you to walk around the bed.
- _____ You have an adequate-sized nightstand or small table for the telephone, glasses, or other important items.
- _____ There is a sturdy chair with arms where you can sit to dress.
- _____ You have wall-to-wall low pile carpeting or a smooth surface floor.
- _____ Your bedroom is located on the first floor of the home. A telephone jack is installed in the room.

Outdoor Area

- _____ Steps and walkways are in good condition.
- _____ Handrails are sturdy and securely fastened.
- _____ Doorways, steps, porches, and walkways have good lighting.
- _____ Porches, balconies, terraces, window wells, and other heights or depressions are protected by railings, closed with banisters, closed with fences, closed with accordion gates, or are otherwise protected.
- _____ Hedges, trees, or shrubs do not hide the view of the street.
- _____ Garage doors are easy for you to operate, even when snow is piled against them.
- _____ The garage is adequately ventilated.

Source: "A Household Safety Checklist" NC Cooperative Extension, FCS 461