

Search input field with a 'Go' button.



Search House & Home:

Search input field with a 'Go' button.

- ▶ Home
- ▶ Buying a House
- ▶ Loans & Financing
- ▶ Insurance
- ▶ Rentals
- ▶ Selling Your House
- ▶ Moving & Relocation
- ▼ Improve & Repair
  - Kitchens
  - Bathrooms
  - Plumbing
  - Electrical
  - Doors & Windows
  - Walls & Floors
  - Heating & Cooling
  - Exterior & Outdoor
  - Tools & Materials
  - Remodeling
  - Ask the Expert
  - Service Professionals
  - Article Index
- ▶ Cook & Entertain
- ▶ Lawn & Garden
- ▶ Décor & Home Living

## Ask the Expert



Home Improvement with Don Vandervort

### Five Steps to a Safer Home

Is your home safe? Most of us would answer "yes," but some statistics suggest that our homes might not be. Studies show that burglaries occur at an average of every eight seconds, 400,000 serious residential fires happen every year, and more child deaths result from accidents than from all diseases combined. Clearly, many houses are not safe. Accidents, fire, and crime put us at risk daily.

Though we can never be completely safe at home, we can take certain steps to dramatically reduce hazards and the possibility of injury or tragedy.

Preparing for problems or accidents is kind of like writing a will—we'd rather not think about it. But it's critical that we be realistic and proactive when it comes to our safety. What we do today could save a family member tomorrow.

With that in mind, let's take a closer look at five key steps you can take now to make your home safer for your family.

**1. Be sure your home is fire-safe**  
Smoke detectors are useless unless



Getty Images

Find More at **Hometips.com**

- [Free advice for improving your home](#)
- [Hometips Buying Guides & Reports](#)
- [How your house works](#)
- [Ideas & News](#)
- [Hometips home page](#)

[Beveled Glass Wedding Invitation Frame](#)

\$39.84  
[Walmart.com](#)

#### Home Essentials

- [Find a contractor](#)
- [Find an apartment](#)
- [Home services](#)

advertisement

#### Resources & Services

- [Senior housing](#)
- [Brand-new homes](#)
- [Foreclosure properties](#)

#### Free Newsletter

[Sign up for a free e-mail newsletter](#) to get the latest tips and trends in real estate, home improvement, cooking, gardening, and more.

they're working. A Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) survey estimates that 16 million households have non-working smoke detectors. In most cases, the batteries are dead or missing. If you haven't done so lately, immediately test every smoke detector in your house by pressing the Test button. If it doesn't sound an alert, replace the battery . . . now! Visit [How Your House Works](#) for free information on care and proper placement of smoke detectors. For more about fire prevention, see [Fire Safety](#).

[More Frames](#)

[3-Piece Wing Chair Set](#)

~~\$497.00~~ **Sale \$397.00**

JCPenney

[More Living Room Chairs](#)

**Note:** The CPSC has recently alerted homeowners to the dangers of room candles. Yearly room candle fire deaths increased 750 percent over the last two decades—probably because room candles have become so much more prevalent as a decorative element. Always extinguish candles at bedtime and when leaving a room.

Keep at least two fully charged, multipurpose (A-B-C) fire extinguishers in your home: One in the kitchen area and one in the garage, located in clear view, near the exit.

## 2. Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

All heating equipment and fuel-burning appliances produce carbon monoxide (CO) gas, which can be deadly if concentrated in the air you breathe. These toxic gases are normally vented out of the house, but if equipment or vents are faulty, they can leak into your living spaces. You can buy carbon monoxide detectors, similar to smoke detectors, and these are a good idea. But the surest prevention is to have a professional technician inspect flues and vents, chimneys, and fuel-burning equipment. Also, never burn charcoal or run a generator (or gas-fueled motor) indoors or in an enclosed space.

## 3. Make your home more secure

A home security system can protect your house and family from burglary, carbon monoxide, and fire—whether you're home or away. The better ones both sound an alarm at your home and signal a local monitoring company to alert the fire department or police. Most people put them in AFTER they've been burglarized or had a fire. (I speak from experience.) That's like closing the gate after the dog is loose.

If you'd like a security system but think they're too pricey, check out offers from [ADT](#), one of the largest, oldest security companies.

Inspect your exterior doors, windows, and locks—most burglars enter homes through doors and windows. Deadbolts should have at least a 1-inch throw (they extend a minimum of 1 inch beyond the door's edge) and be made of case-hardened steel. The door's latch plate should be mounted with 3-inch-long (or longer) screws so a burglar can't easily shatter the jamb.

For doors that have windows, a double-cylinder deadbolt (requiring a key from both sides of the door) is best because it prevents a burglar from simply breaking the glass to reach in and turn the bolt. But when people are in the house, be sure to leave the key in the interior lock to allow quick escape in an emergency.

For information on the strongest, most secure doors, see the Hometips buyer's guide, [Entry Doors](#).

## 4. Be prepared for emergencies

Develop an escape plan and practice it with a family drill. Everyone should know how to get out of the house and where to assemble safely outdoors. Each room should have at least two exits. Establish who will be responsible for small children or the elderly or handicapped.

The American Red Cross has designed and endorsed a variety of safety and first-aid kits that you can browse and buy online at [The Red Cross Shop](#). Purchasing these also contributes toward other Red Cross endeavors.

## 5. Make your home safe for children

Whether or not you have children, if you have a swimming pool or hot tub, be sure small kids can't get to it on their own. Never leave children unattended near pools or tubs. This goes for ponds, fountains, and garden water features, too.

Additionally, if you have small children in your home, check for poisons or objects that could be ingested, and eliminate the potential for falls. For a free, complete step-by-step guide, see [Childproof Your Home](#).

Again, you can never fully eliminate home hazards and dangers, but by taking these five steps, you can help ensure that your family will be safe at home.

---

**Related Information**

-  [Home Safety and Security Center](#)
-  [Home Safety and Security Essentials](#)
-  [Home Security Guide](#)

Try MSN Internet Software for FREE!

[MSN Home](#) | [My MSN](#) | [Hotmail](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Money](#) | [People & Chat](#) | [Search](#)

[Feedback](#) | [Help](#)

---

© 2004 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. [Terms of Use](#) [Advertise](#) [TRUSTe Approved](#) [Privacy Statement](#) [GetNetWise](#) [Anti-Spam Policy](#)