

HUNTING HOME HAZARDS

FACILITATOR GUIDE



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ACTIVITY: IDENTIFYING HOME HAZARDS

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to educate about hazards in the home. Participants will learn how to identify hazards at home and fix them through a hazard hunt game.

Objectives:

- Identify types of hazards that commonly exist in homes.
- Assess homes for the presence of these hazards.
- Recognize how to mitigate many common household hazards.

Preparation and Needed Materials: Prior to conducting this activity, you may want to:

- Place a few potential hazards, such as a poisonous houseplant, in the meeting place for the activity, or be prepared to point out potential hazards in the meeting place by saying (for example): “What could happen to this overhead light in an earthquake?” or “What would happen to this fluorescent bulb in a fire?” Tailor potential hazards to your local area.
- Conduct a home hazard hunt, so that you can share lessons learned with participants.

Presentation Tips:

- Welcome participants to the session.
- Explain that by the end of the session, they will be able to identify common household hazards. Participants will also have a checklist to use for a home hazard hunt, along with tips for dealing with chemical emergencies.
- Tell participants that we all want our homes to be safe. However, approximately 6.8 million accidents happen in homes every year. Many more injuries occur when unsafe household conditions are combined with emergency situations such as floods, fires, and earthquakes.
- Ask participants to list common types of hazards in the home. Acknowledge the answers and then present the following types of hazards:
 - Chemical hazards
 - Electrical hazards
 - Fire hazards
 - Flood hazards

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Presentation Tips: (Continued)

- Structural hazards
- Organic hazards, such as poisonous plants or insects

Add any other types of hazards as necessary.

- Divide the meeting place into grids or areas. Separate participants into groups and assign them each an area. Encourage them to assess the area for potential hazards. Give them 5 minutes to complete the activity.
- Ask each group to report its findings. Supplement what they report as necessary. Some potential hazards in the meeting place might include extension cords and outlets, unsecured heavy furniture and fixtures, fluorescent light bulbs, poisonous house plants, industrial cleaners with chemicals, or structural cracks.
- Next, review the steps that participants could take to mitigate or eliminate each of the hazards found.
- Distribute the handouts on the home hazard hunt and chemical hazards. Encourage the participants to do a home hazard hunt with their household members. If you did one before this session, share any lessons learned.
- Select a common chemical product. Pass out the item and point to the warning label on the package. Note the importance of reading the labels on all products.
- Thank participants for attending the session and tell them additional preparedness information will be covered in future sessions.

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HOME HAZARD HUNT: HANDOUT



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ACTIVITY: HAVING A HOME HAZARD HUNT

Take the checklist below and divide it into sections that are applicable for your household. Each household member takes one or more sections and goes room by room through the home. Don't forget to include garages and yards. Check off each item and circle or highlight the things that need to be fixed. Make sure to work together to address the hazards, going through one section at a time.

Chemical Hazards (See the separate handout that lists common household chemical hazards.)

- Are flammable liquids—such as gasoline, cleaning products, acetone, and paint/lacquer thinner—stored away from the home? Are they in secure containers? Is the area well ventilated?
- Do the storage containers have labels stating that they are approved by Underwriters Laboratory (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM)?
- Are the containers stored away from heat sources and children?
- Do all chemical storage containers have Mr. Yuk labels on them to warn children?

Electrical Hazards

- Are extension and appliance cords in good condition, or are they frayed or cracked?
- If extension cords are used, are they “strong enough” or rated for the electrical load they are carrying? Can someone trip over them?
- Are extension cords going under rugs or over nails, heaters, or pipes?
- Are prongs and plugs tight fitting? Is there one plug per one outlet (as opposed to a cube tap, where multiple plugs go into one outlet)?
- Is the wiring in outlets covered by a plate and not exposed?
- Do all appliances operate safely and not overheat, short out, smoke, or spark?

Fire Hazards

- Are gasoline, turpentine, paint thinner, kerosene, and charcoal lighter fluid stored away from heat sources and children?
- Are old rags, papers, mattresses, broken furniture, clothes, curtains, or other combustible materials found near electrical equipment, gas appliances, or flammable materials?
- Are there dried grass clippings, tree trimmings, or pulled weeds on the property?

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Fire Hazards (Continued)

- Are heaters, candles, or matches in high-traffic areas or accessible to children?
- Are heaters standing upright, without extension cords? (If feasible, they should have automatic shutoffs.)
- Are there enough fire extinguishers (one for each floor)? Have they been recharged as directed? Do you know how to use them?
- Are there enough smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors (one for each floor)? Have the batteries been tested and changed as needed? (Change batteries at least once a year; some recommend doing it when you're setting clocks at the start and end of Daylight Savings Time. If possible, replace the batteries with those lasting 10 years. Many fire departments distribute smoke detectors and batteries for those who are unable to purchase them.) Does everyone know what to do when the alarm sounds? If there are people in the house who cannot hear an alarm, install ones that flash and sound.

Organic Hazards

- Are any of the houseplants poisonous or toxic? (Poisonous types include aloe, peace lily, and philodendron.) If so, are they out of reach of pets and children?
- Have you seen poisonous animals such as spiders or scorpions in the home? Consider pesticides, and always be cautious when reaching into boxes and corners, or putting on shoes.
- Is there any visible mold? Treat mold with a solution of bleach and water (no more than 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water) or seek professional help.

Flood Hazards

- Check gutters and downspouts to be sure they are in good working order and not clogged with debris. Use pipes to direct drain water away from the foundation.
- If storm drains are located near your property, check to ensure they are not clogged with debris or ask your local authorities to do so.
- Check for adequate sloping of soil or fill away from your foundation. If needed, add soil or fill around the foundation to obtain more adequate drainage away from the building.
- Look for areas where there may be erosion due to fast moving water. If needed, add rocks to slow the movement of water.

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Flood Hazards (Continued)

- Check into the feasibility of having a supply of sandbags or temporary closures for parts of your building where floodwaters could enter. If you choose this remedy, ensure that household members are prepared to fill the sandbags or place the temporary closure when needed.
- If you might experience flood problems, check on the availability and advisability of having flood insurance by contacting local insurance providers.

Structural Hazards

- Have water heaters, large appliances, bookcases, other tall and heavy furniture, shelves, mirrors, pictures, and overhead light fixtures been anchored to wall studs?
- Have pictures or mirrors been moved away from where people sleep or sit?
- Have large or heavy objects been moved to lower shelves or stored somewhere else?
- Does the water heater or other gas appliances have flexible gas supply lines?
- Are cabinet doors latched or locked so that items cannot fall out?
- Are hallways and stairways well lit?
- Are hallways and stairways free of clutter?
- Have any deep cracks in ceilings or the foundation been repaired?

Hazards for Small Children

- Are safety gates at the bottom and top of stairways?
- Are guards around fireplaces, radiators, hot pipes, or wood-burning stoves?
- Are sharp edges cushioned with corner guards or other material?
- Are curtain cords and shade pulls out of reach?
- Is the hot water heater set at a safe temperature (120 degrees or less)?
- Are prescription drugs and over-the-counter medicines kept in childproof containers and out of reach?
- Are shampoos and cosmetics kept out of reach?

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Hazards for Small Children (Continued)

- Are all sharp objects in the bathroom, kitchen, and other areas kept out of reach?
- Are toilet seats and lids down when not in use?
- Are outlets covered?
- Are beds or cribs away from radiators or other hot surfaces?
- Do mattresses fit the sides of cribs snugly? Are crib slats no more than 2-3/8 inches apart?
- Do toy boxes have secure lids and safe-closing hinges?

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CHEMICAL EMERGENCIES:
HANDOUT



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Identifying Chemical Hazards

The average household contains many dangerous chemicals found in common products. They can be toxic, or corrosive, meaning that they can wear away containers or harm skin. They may also catch on fire or explode. Below is a list of common household products with potentially dangerous chemicals.

<p>Cleaning Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oven cleaners • Drain cleaners • Wood and metal cleaners and polishes • Toilet cleaners • Tub, tile, and shower cleaners • Laundry bleach • Pool chemicals 	<p>Indoor Pesticides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ant sprays and baits • Cockroach sprays and baits • Flea repellents and shampoo • Bug sprays • Houseplant insecticides • Moth repellents • Mouse and rat poisons and baits 	<p>Automotive Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motor oil • Fuel additives • Carburetor and fuel cleaners • Air conditioning refrigerants • Starter fluids • Automotive batteries • Transmission and brake fluid • Antifreeze
<p>Workshop/Painting Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhesives and glues • Furniture strippers • Oil- or enamel-based paint • Stains and finishes • Paint thinners and turpentine • Paint strippers and removers • Photographic chemicals • Fixatives and other solvents 	<p>Lawn and Garden Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbicides • Insecticides • Fungicides/wood preservatives <p>Miscellaneous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Batteries • Mercury thermostats or thermometers • Fluorescent light bulbs • Driveway sealer 	<p>Other Flammable Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propane tanks and other compressed gas cylinders • Kerosene • Home heating oil • Diesel fuel • Gas/oil mix • Lighter fluid

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Tips for Safe Use of Hazardous Chemicals

- Buy only as much of a chemical as you think you will use. Check to see if you can share leftovers with neighbors or a local business, charity, or government agency.
- Keep products containing hazardous materials in their original containers and never remove the labels unless the container is corroding. Corroding containers should be repackaged and clearly labeled.
- Never store hazardous products in food containers.
- Never mix household hazardous chemicals or waste with other products. Some of them—such as chlorine bleach and ammonia—may react, ignite, or explode.
- Never use gasoline, benzene, or other flammable liquids for starting fires or cleaning indoors.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the proper use of the household chemical.
- Never smoke while using household chemicals.
- Never use hair spray, cleaning solutions, paint products, or pesticides near an open flame (e.g., pilot light, lighted candle, fireplace, wood-burning stove, etc.). Although you may not be able to see or smell them, vapor particles in the air could catch fire or explode.
- Clean up any chemical spill immediately. Use rags to clean up the spill. Wear gloves and eye protection. Allow the fumes in the rags to evaporate outdoors, then dispose of the rags by wrapping them in newspaper and placing them in a sealed plastic bag in your trash can.
- Dispose of hazardous materials correctly. Take household hazardous waste to a local collection program. Check with your county or State environmental or solid waste agency to learn if there is a household hazardous waste collection program in your area.

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Dealing With Chemical Emergencies

Post the number of local emergency medical services and the National Poison Control Center by all telephones.

**POST POISON CONTROL
NUMBER BY PHONES!**

1-800-222-1222

Symptoms of poisoning:

- Difficulty breathing
- Irritation of the eyes, skin, throat, or respiratory tract
- Changes in skin color
- Headache or blurred vision
- Dizziness
- Clumsiness or lack of coordination
- Cramps or diarrhea

If someone is experiencing toxic poisoning symptoms or has been exposed to a household chemical:

- Find any containers of the substance that are readily available in order to provide requested information. Call 911 and then the National Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.
- Follow the emergency operator or dispatcher's first aid instructions carefully. The first aid advice found on containers may be out of date or inappropriate. Do not give anything by mouth unless advised to do so by a medical professional.
- Discard clothes that may have been contaminated. Some chemicals may not wash out completely and can cross-contaminate other clothing or continue to cause problems.

If there is a danger of fire or explosion:

- Get out of the residence immediately. Do not spend time collecting items or calling the fire department when you are in danger. Call the fire department from outside (using a cellular phone or a neighbor's phone) after you are safely away from danger.
- Stay upwind and away from the residence to avoid breathing toxic fumes. The way to know you are upwind is to look at flags, trees, or other items moving. Upwind is the opposite direction of the way the wind is blowing.