

Safety in the Home

Living on your own brings about a whole set of concerns that you may not have thought of previously. Maintaining a safe living environment is necessary; here are some tips:

- Turn off appliances when not in use to avoid electrical fires. Run electrical cords along walls and not under rugs, and do not overload outlets. Use a surge protector when you need an extra outlet. Do not use extension cords. Check cords regularly for damage and never repair them by splicing them.
- Confirm that there is a working smoke detector near all bedrooms and on every level of the home. Smoke detectors need to be replaced every three years. Carbon monoxide detectors need to be on each level and replaced every six years or sooner, if recommended by manufacturer.
- Space heaters are NOT recommended because they are a common cause of fire.
- Clean the dryer vent after each load to reduce the risk of fire.
- Use surge protectors to protect electronic equipment from surges caused by power outages.
- Keep candles on a stable surface far from combustibles, wind, doors, children, and pets. Keep in “hurricane” or other types of candle holders.
- If you use a fireplace or wood-burning stove, make certain that the chimney is clean prior to use. Creosote accumulates in stovepipes and chimneys and may ignite if not cleaned periodically. Cracks in a wood-burning stove and in the firebrick liner must be repaired before use.
- Use care in the kitchen. Keep appliances and vents clean to prevent grease buildup. Turn pot handles inward so they aren’t easily knocked off the stove. Watch that cooking oil isn’t heated too quickly, as this can easily start a fire, and do not leave it unattended. Never put out a grease fire with water; this causes the fire to spread. Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen or cover ignited food with a metal lid to block its oxygen supply.
- Make it harder for burglars to tell when you’re away from home by using timers to turn lights on and off at various times you’re not around. Lower the sound of answering machines so they cannot be heard from outside. If you have a garage door and vehicle, keep it closed so that no one can anticipate your habits as to whether or not you are home.
- Have emergency phone numbers for the fire, police, and medical emergency handy, and keep a first-aid kit available. Establish a safe place to meet your roommates in case of a disaster. Store bottled water, extra warm clothing, shoes, food, and medicine, flashlights, fire extinguishers, and a battery-operated radio for use in the event of an emergency.
- Register your cell phone for timely emergency notifications at www.sccecc.org. Doing so provides an initial warning to protect at-risk citizens in a specific geographic area.