



Make Your Home A Safe Haven



Make sure your home's wiring and appliances are in good shape to avoid disasters.

by Scott McGillivray

(NAPSA)—We think of our homes as our haven from the world. In it, we house the people and things that we treasure most. In time, we might also undertake to expand or modify our homes to better suit our needs through different life stages. Perhaps a previous owner has done the same. Remodeling a house can provide significant advantages and serve as an opportunity to make things better, especially if your home is getting on in years. It's also a good time to identify potential problems in order to ensure safety, comfort and performance. Here are five things to consider when remodeling:

What's behind the walls? Do you know what type of insulation exists or its current condition? It's worthwhile to find out. Some older homes contain outdated materials that could be harmful. In basements and bathrooms, in attics and in areas where there's been some moisture penetration, it's not uncommon to discover moldy fiberglass or other insulating materials that should be removed. This can compromise air quality and be the source of potential health issues. When upgrading, opt for an insulation with an inorganic composition. Professional builders often favor a stone wool product such as Rockwool Comfortbatt or Safe 'n' Sound because it resists moisture, adds fire protection and is an excellent sound-absorbing material.

Consider a professional home inspection. The goal is to help identify any potential hazards within your home.

These can take many forms. Think knob-and-tube wiring, overloaded panels or cracked foundations.

Lead paint. Older houses (pre-1978) may have base coats of lead paint beneath the newer ones. Lead can cause harmful effects if ingested or inhaled as dust. Be careful to avoid raising dust if scraping or sanding old walls or molding. Test for (and seal) exposed areas of lead paint.

Educate yourself about air quality. Radon is a particular concern. It's a radioactive gas that naturally accumulates in some houses—and the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. Use a radon long-term detector to measure the level of radon in your home to determine if you need to reduce it.

Pay close attention to combustion appliances. If not properly maintained or vented to the outside, combustion appliances, including your furnace, gas stove or water heater, can release pollutants such as carbon monoxide—a colorless and odorless gas. Ensure appliances are well maintained and inspected at least once a year. Install carbon monoxide detectors.

There's no place like home, so doing all that you can to ensure that it's a safe, healthy and comfortable place will give you the peace of mind necessary to enjoy it to its fullest.

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