

Safety Around The Home

Stay In Your Home Safely As You Age

(NAPSA)—It's called "aging in place"—being able to stay in your home safely as you age without having to move to an assisted-living facility. According to AARP, 70 percent of 65-year-olds are living where they'll be the rest of their lives.

With more and more seniors staying in their homes longer, it's important that those homes are as safe as possible, says Charles Valinotti. He's Senior Vice President of QBE Regional Insurance, which underwrites property and casualty coverage through General Casualty, Unigard, Farmers Union Insurance and QBE Agri.

To stretch out their years of independent living, seniors should pay special attention to fall prevention, yard safety, and home modification and repair.

Fend off falls: Statistics on falls are staggering. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three adults 65 and older falls each year. About half of those who suffer fall-related injuries have to move to nursing facilities. "Seniors should take inventory of risk factors in their homes that could lead to falls," Valinotti says. "They can ask an occupational therapist to conduct a walk-through and make recommendations to prevent falls."

Some tips to fend off falls:

- Repair sidewalk and driveway cracks.
- Install handrails on stairs and steps.
- Secure carpeting and avoid throw rugs.
- Reduce clutter.
- Use a night-light.
- Consider subscribing to an emergency response system.

Safety by the yard: Yard maintenance holds hazards for seniors. A Johns Hopkins University study found the top 10 injuries



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among seniors while working in their yards are caused by lawn-mowing mishaps—from lifting the mower to trying to service the mower while it's still running.

"Consider getting help with yard work from relatives or think about paying someone to do it," Valinotti says. "A lawn and garden company may have a program that helps older people with yard work, as well as other outdoor jobs such as gutter cleaning."

Don't forget ongoing home safety issues: "Because seniors often live in older homes, it's important to make sure the electrical wiring is in good shape," Valinotti says. "We've seen many older homes where fuses are overloaded. That's a loss waiting to happen."

Safety inside and out: Making modifications and repairs can allow seniors to more easily manage bathing, cooking and stair-climbing activities. Valinotti suggests installing sturdy grab bars in the bathroom, outside ramps for easy access and low countertops in the kitchen. Area Agencies on Aging have information on low-cost contractors and funding assistance.