



# KERN COUNTY ELDER NEWS



Monthly Information Article | Kern County DEAR/EDRT TEAM\*

\*(Dependent/Elder Abuse Review) Team/EDRT (Elder Death Review Team)



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## HOME SAFETY FOR SENIORS



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**HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!** As we start the new year, let's look around the house, both inside and outside, to ensure the best safety practices are in place. One of the leading causes of senior injuries are falls. Sometimes these falls can cause very serious injuries and even death.

According to the CDC, adults 65 and older experience thirty-seven million falls each year. Not all falls result in injury, but well over a third of those who experience a fall stated that the injury limited their activities for at least one day.

Most hospitalizations from falls are due to hip fractures or head injuries. Traumatic brain injury (TBI) related to deaths and hospitalizations are most often caused by falls. Over eighty percent of emergency room visit hospitalizations for a hip fracture were due to a fall.

Enough stats and figures. Let's look at some things that can be done to prevent mishaps, including falls around the house as well as some other home safety practices.

Starting with the outside of the home - make sure to have entryway lighting. Motion lighting is a great addition not only for yourself, but for prowler and burglary deterrence. Motion lights are only activated by motions, bulbs need replaced less often and they use far less energy saving money.

Exterior doors, including storm and security doors, should open easily and should be able to be locked and unlocked with ease for smooth entering and exiting.

Handrails should be installed around all steps. Adding nonslip tread to steps and stairs is also a great way to prevent falls in these areas. Fix cracked

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concrete or trip hazards such as tree branches that have breached the walkway. Mark these areas with brightly colored tape or cones until repaired. Install ramps, when necessary, as well.

Bathrooms should have bars in the shower/bathtub area and the toilet/water closet area. There are programs out there that can assist seniors and disabled folks by providing and installing these items, often at no cost.

In the bedroom, keep clutter non-existent. Getting up in the middle of the night either to use the bathroom or in an emergency could result in a serious fall. The bed should be easy for you to get in and out of with little trouble.

Electrical fires seem to start more often in the bedroom than in any other room in the house. Make sure to keep combustible items such as bedding, clothing and curtains away from space heaters. Select the type of space heater that will automatically shut off if there is movement or the heater is knocked over. Use only UL (previously Underwriters Laboratories) approved electrical items notably electric blankets and throws. Inspect cords regularly for wear and damage.



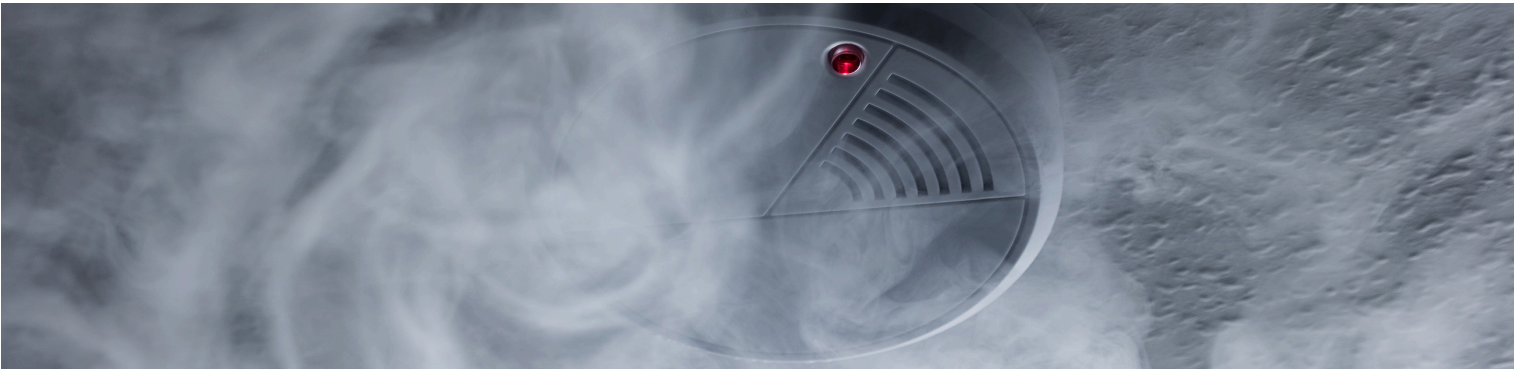
Living rooms and family rooms as well as kitchens and bathrooms often have throw rugs. Make sure the rugs are non-slip or are fixed to the floor with something such as Velcro. When setting up charging stations for phones, laptops, tablets and the like in any room, setting these areas out of the way to prevent trips over cords is best. Ideally set charging stations up at a sitting area or in a corner of the room.

Kitchens are a culprit for accidents too. Not only trips and falls, but these areas, just like the garage, contain all kinds of tools that can cause injuries. Often injuries occur because a tool or implement is not used for its intended purpose. For example, a screwdriver to pry something open instead of to screw a screw in place. Or even worse, using a knife to pry something open. OUCH!!! Speaking of knives, always use slip resistant cutting boards and keep knives properly stored.

Make sure appliances are in top working order. Never put metal into a microwave and make certain gas burners truly in the off position. Keep a fire extinguisher or a fire blanket in both the kitchen and garage. If you have never heard of fire blankets, they are specialized compact, lightweight items specific for extinguishing a fire. They are a great tool for the kitchen, garage, RV and even camping. Fire blankets are inexpensive and easy to use.

Making sure thresholds connecting each room have little or no change in elevation. If there is a significant height difference, threshold ramps can be simply installed making room transition much easier and safe.

Property crime is high on the list for seniors, so having a camera system such as a doorbell cam and/or



cameras on the exterior of the home is also a great deterrent for burglars. Having a home security system is a big plus as well. A camera system with a speaker is a great option to determine if the door needs to be answered. Often speakers allow remote access and speaking to someone at the door will make it appear you are home. Burglars most often just want your stuff and don't want anyone home. If burglars think someone is in the home, most often they will move on.

Another great deterrent is leaving the television or radio on in the home when you are gone. Having a radio on a talk radio station in the room closest to the front door makes it sound as if there are people in the home.

And finally, I can't forget to mention more specific home fire safety since I spent quite a few years as a Fire Education Specialist. Please, please make sure you have multiple working smoke detectors throughout your home or apartment. If you rent your home or apartment your landlord is required by law to install working smoke detectors.

Today's technology of smoke detectors offers multi-sensing and carbon monoxide combinations. Those individuals that are hard of hearing can install smoke detectors with strobe lights and other features that will alert them when necessary.

Make certain there is a smoke detector in each bedroom and level of the home as well as common areas such as family rooms, living rooms and halls. Keep smoke detectors out of the kitchen areas and at least ten feet from the oven and stove to minimize false alarms.

For battery operated smoke detectors, check batteries monthly and change the batteries when the clocks are changed in both spring and fall. If you need assistance with smoke detectors you can call your local fire station, and they will assist you.

Start the New Year off by doing a safety walk around both inside and outside your home, making sure your 2025 is safe and secure. Be smart, be safe.

**Sources:**

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3. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)  
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