

13 Things Homeowners Should Know to Stay Safe at Home

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May 29—(StatePoint) Did you know that adhering to proper building safety codes and standards can prevent thousands of accidents each year and save homeowners significant repair costs?

Proper knowledge of building codes and the importance of permits and inspections can help homeowners avoid costly mistakes and ensure their projects are safe and compliant.

Building Safety Month shines a spotlight on the essential role of modern building codes and standards in ensuring public safety. This campaign, led by the International Code Council, brings together insights from leading experts in building safety, including code officials, building inspectors and residential building specialists.

Building safety professionals are lifelong learners, constantly adapting to new codes and building materials. Similarly, homeowners must continue to stay informed about their properties to ensure longevity and safety.

Here's what the Code Council wishes homeowners knew about maintaining and improving their homes safely and effectively:

1. Embrace Building Safety Professionals: Building safety professionals are valuable allies and can assist in ensuring that contractors perform their work correctly. This oversight protects you from potential safety hazards

2. Understand the Reasons Behind Permits: Permits are not just logistic hurdles; they are safeguards that, if obtained and followed correctly, can prevent potentially deadly situations. For instance, installing a water heater without the proper permit could lead to dangerous gas leaks.

3. Know When to Obtain a Permit: Not all home improvements require permits. For instance, replacing windows without altering structural elements typically doesn't need one. Understanding these nuances can save you time and money while ensuring compliance with local regulations.

4. Get Proper Approval: Insurance companies will require that the work done on your home is inspected and approved. For example, if you install a wood stove without proper inspection and it causes a fire, your insurance may deny the claim. So, always ensure that any home repairs or installations are permitted and inspected to avoid financial loss.

5. Verify Contractor Credentials: Before hiring a contractor, verify their credentials. Doing your due diligence helps ensure you hire a reliable professional and avoid future problems.

6. Be Prepared: DIY home improvement projects can be rewarding, but they require thorough preparation. Without the right knowledge and tools, you might end up causing more harm than good. To ensure the safety and quality of a project, it's often best to leave complex projects to professionals. However, if you do choose to DIY, consider working with your local building department to ensure you meet building safety codes and standards.

7. Consider Future Homeowners: Think long term. While future buyers may have different needs, ensuring that your home improvements meet current building codes will make the property more appealing and valuable.

8. Prevent Heating Health Hazards: Carbon monoxide poisoning is a serious risk with improper home heating. For instance, a homeowner using a wood stove without proper ventilation may experience dangerous carbon monoxide levels. Installing carbon monoxide detectors and ensuring proper ventilation are critical.

9. Be Radon Aware: Radon, a naturally occurring gas, can be more dangerous than many homeowners realize. Historic homes, in particular, may have elevated levels. Installing a radon detector, similar to a smoke



10. Protect Your Water Supply: Proper water supply maintenance is crucial. Implementing backflow prevention for irrigation systems and ensuring downspouts are correctly installed can prevent water damage and contamination, protecting your home and its occupants.

11. Perform Maintenance Checks: Regular inspections of home utilities can prevent significant issues. Checking for leaks and rust and ensuring efficient operation can extend the lifespan of appliances and prevent unexpected breakdowns.

12. Separate Garage Living Spaces: Converting a garage into a living space requires planning. Proper separation of fire-rated materials is necessary to prevent potential fire hazards and ensure compliance with safety codes, especially if the garage still stores vehicles or equipment.

13. Know Your Home's Utilities: Understanding your home's utility systems is essential for effective management and safety. For example, knowing whether your home has a gas line and how to shut it off can prevent dangerous situations during home repairs or emergencies.

Building safety is a shared responsibility between professionals and homeowners. By staying informed and proactive, you can ensure your home remains valuable, functional and safe.

Take steps to ensure your home's safety. Visit the Code Council's website at [iccsafe.org](https://www.iccsafe.org) for more tips and resources.
