

# Don't take home safety for granted

Chances are pretty good you don't walk around your house asking yourself questions like, "I wonder if there are any potential carbon monoxide leaks around here?" Or, "Have I checked the temperature and pressure valve on the water heater lately?"

You figure, hey, if the doors are locked, the stove and oven are off and the furnace is in good repair, the house is safe.

Maybe so. But then again, maybe not.

Rick Bowling, owner of AmeriSpec Home Inspection Service in Plymouth and Farmington Hills, doesn't want you to be in a constant state of panic about home safety. But he would like to encourage you to spend at least a couple of weeks at the beginning of the summer assessing the total safety of your house.

"When our professionals give homeowners a step-by-step tour, we point out more than 400 potential hazards," he said. "It's not only a good safety policy, it is also a smart education. It is the way to learn the real condition of any home you plan on buying, and it's the smart way to help maintain value in the home you already own."

To get you thinking, Bowling has prepared a list of some areas in the house that could be potential safety concerns.

**Fire-rated wall:** A fire-rated wall

and door between an attached garage and house are important. Storage of gasoline, chemicals, the housing of automobiles or sometimes the presence of hot water heaters and furnaces make garage areas a high fire risk.

**Fire-resistant drywall:** An acceptable wall finish. The door should be metal-clad insulated or at least a solid core wood without any glass. A pet door would compromise the integrity of a fire door, and dryer exhausts should not be run from the house into the garage.

**Trip hazards:** Common exterior safety concerns are heaved sections of concrete on stairs leading to entry areas or porches and decks, or protrusions from the ground such as small tree stumps or elevated sewer cleanouts that create trip hazards.

**Porches:** Porches, especially those second floor or higher, and decks should have railings that are solid and secure with sufficient vertical spacing between the balusters to prevent children from falling through.

**Loose brickwork:** Beware of loose brickwork, especially from chimneys, that can become dislodged and cause injury.

**Exposed wiring:** Any exposed wiring or outside wiring low to the ground may be dangerous. Check to see if overhead wires pass over a swimming pool or outdoor hot tub. Bad news if they do.

**Smoke detectors:** They are inexpensive, readily available and you have to have them. Get them and put them in all living areas.

**Water heater:** Look at the hot water tank. Make sure that dangerous fumes resulting from fuel combustion are properly vented toward the outside. Vent pipes, which typically are found at the top of the tank, should be positioned on an incline so the fumes are dispelled properly.

The pipes should be directed to a "r/valve," such as a chimney, to allow the fumes to dissipate into the atmosphere. Vent pipes should be free of holes, rust and corrosion.

**Main electric service panel:** Check for corroded joints in water supply lines that may be located directly above the panel. Repair them, move them. Make sure the fuses are the right size.

**Pools:** Enclose the pool area with a four-foot-high fence and no foot hold. Check with your local building department regarding fence height.

All gates leading to the pool area should be self-closing with a self-latching system that is out of reach of children. All exit doors and windows to the area should have an alarm programmed to sound when the door is open.

AmeriSpec inspections take two to three hours and generally cost \$200 to \$300 based on the square-footage of the house.

# Homearama furniture put on sale

The furniture and accessories in most of the Homearama 1993 houses will be put up for sale on Sunday, June 13, the last day of the show's run, in the Silver Bell Village subdivision in Orion Township.

All styles of furniture, from American traditional to contemporary to European, moderately priced to expensive, will be offered for sale just as they are displayed.

Not every house is participating, however. Some of the furnishings may be the property of designers, furniture companies or builders. The houses themselves will be shown by appointment only after the show closes and can be bought with furnishings included, in most cases.

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