



When Your Home Makes You Sick...

Brought to you by Housing Rights, Inc.

Introduction:

This publication is brought to you by HRI staff and interns. It was created because of our growing concern regarding the health and safety of Renters living in substandard conditions. This is part of a larger effort on our part to address safety issues. Our Safe Home Campaign includes:

- ❖ Informational packets containing material covering a variety of home safety issues that we distribute at festivals.
- ❖ This publication: **When Your Home Makes You Sick**
- ❖ Related information made available through two of our websites: www.Rentersrights.info/selfadvocacy.htm and www.housingrights.com/campaign/safehome.htm
- ❖ Collaborations with health organizations so that together we are able to address health and housing issues for our mutual clients.

For more information about our efforts call us at 510-548-8776 or if you want help with a housing problem and live in Alameda or Contra Costa County call 1-800-261-2298.

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When Your Home Makes You Sick

The problem could be as simple as a broken heater or as complex as asthma triggered by mold spores in the air. We get calls:

- ❖ from Renters injured from falling down broken stairs;
- ❖ from Renters sick from human sewage flowing through the closet;
- ❖ about apartments so damp and filthy that mushrooms are growing in the carpet;
- ❖ from Renters who get migraine headaches triggered by commonly used cleaning chemicals so severe they are hospitalized;
- ❖ from Renters whose children have chronic colds because the windows are broken and the stove is the only source of heat.

There are a number of things that happen in people's homes that can make one or more members of the household sick. These things or conditions could be the responsibility of the Landlord, the Renter, the Builder, the Homeowner, or a combination. Sometimes the conditions are unhealthy for everyone-sometimes for only certain people. For example, some types of mold (that are very uncommon) will make anyone who comes into contact sick. Other types of mold are only harmful to people who happen to be allergic to them.

First, figure out if your home is the problem. Sometimes that's easy; sometimes it's not. Some examples: 1) You fall down the stairs and break your leg. You've told the property manager three times that the stairs were broken. He told you everything was okay.

2) You've been having asthma attacks and nothing seems to help. It turns out that you are allergic to cockroaches. You get migraines when the Landlord sprays for pests.

If you think that your home is making you and/or a member of your household sick or if you think that there are unsafe conditions in your home that could harm you and/or a member of your household this publication is designed for you.

What Is It That Is Making You Sick?

If you don't know or aren't sure—you will have to try and figure it out.

First, what are your symptoms? Describe them in detail.

Second, keep a log or diary of your symptoms. Write down when they occur, what you are you doing, and what is going on around you in your home when they occur.

Third, if you can, go to the doctor or other health professional to confirm or disprove your suspicions. Sometimes, tests are not available or are too expensive to prove the relationship between conditions in your home and your health. In that case, your diary may be enough to at least start the conversation with your Landlord. Especially if you can 'test' your theory that something in your home is making you sick.

Fourth, conduct research. Ask friends and family if they have experienced the same symptoms, and go on the internet or to the library and research your symptoms and/or the problem that is causing your symptoms. (Editor's Note of Caution: so far every time I've looked up a symptom on the internet my amateur diagnosis has been wrong. However, I do know people have been able to learn a great deal about their health by conducting their own research.)

Fifth, try to remove the problem. Clean up the mold; spray for cockroaches; do what you can to at least temporarily remove the problem from your home. If your symptoms go away or are reduced, you can argue that your symptoms are related to the conditions in your home.

Sixth, if you can't remove the problem, temporarily, try to remove yourself. This might not be easy. If you can, stay with a friend or family member or go on vacation. And then document your symptoms (or lack of symptoms) in your log/diary.

What In Your Home Could Harm You?

What do they say? Most accidents occur at home? Our homes can be dangerous places. The danger can come from the simple: tripping over a toy left in the middle of the living room; to the complex, an improperly vented heater that leaks carbon monoxide into the bedroom.

- ❖ **There are common sense checklists that you can use to make your home safer (for you, for children and for seniors).**
- ❖ **There are checklists that you can use to make your home as safe as possible in the case of a natural disaster.**
- ❖ **There are housing codes that the Landlord is responsible for when he/she goes into the residential rental business. Many local jurisdictions will inspect rental property for building code violations. Call them and ask if the conditions in your home may violate local codes. Ask if they will come and conduct an inspection. (Note: some jurisdictions will not conduct an inspection without telling the landlord. Be sure to ask. You may or may not want your landlord involved at this time.)**

Examples of these checklists are included in this publication. Some hazards or unsafe conditions are obvious; others are not. We recommend that you use these or similar checklists to review the safety of your home and potential safety hazards. If you've identified hazard, i.e. a condition in your home that could cause harm to you and/or other members of your household, the first question you need to ask is: **Who Is Responsible For The Problem?**

Who Is Responsible For The Problem?

How much can you do to fix the problem? (It is very important that you try to fix the problem yourself first.....up to a point.) If the problem is easy to fix and you can do it without too much trouble, then do it! If there is a nail sticking out that tears your clothes or scratches your skin....nail it in. Have a vermin problem? Do what you can to fix that problem. Clean all traces of food from the kitchen, put all food in airtight containers, and take your garbage out every night.

However, don't try to fix broken electrical outlets or plumbing. Those tasks may require experts. Even if you know how to repair these types of problems the Landlord has the right to insist that licensed and professionals do the work in order to protect their investment.

Once you have done what you can to resolve the problem, the easier it will be to show what the Landlord is responsible for. Document everything.

However, there are two other things to consider:

Who caused the problem in the first place. Kids played a little too hard and put a hole in the wall? You are responsible for fixing the hole. Fix it! If the problem is too much for you (you don't have the money or you need an expert) then attempt to negotiate with your Landlord. Ask if he/she will fix the damage (which he should want to do in order to protect his property). Offer to make payments to pay off what you owe for the damage.

If you are partly responsible then do your part and ask the Landlord to do his/her part. (Always put your request in writing). For example, you have an aquarium which creates a lot of moisture. Your apartment has a lot of mold. Take steps to make sure the aquarium isn't the source of the mold, make sure there is ventilation, wipe down all wet surfaces regularly. If mold keeps coming back the mold may be coming from another source of moisture and the Landlord would be responsible for finding and fixing that part of the problem.

Did you notice that the toilet is leaking every time you flush? Don't want to bother the Landlord? Big mistake. Tell him/her right away in writing. A good Landlord will want to fix it as soon as possible to avoid further damage to their valuable property. A bad Landlord who ignores your request for repairs will be on notice that you have informed him/her. You will be able to use this when you pursue other means to get repairs done (getting an inspection for code violations, calling an agency like Housing Rights, Inc. for help). Put everything in writing. Our publication, **Code Enforcement for Renters: Self-Advocacy Packet**, contains detailed information on your options for getting your Landlord to make repairs.

What You Can Do?

If your home is making you sick or there are hazardous conditions that could harm you and/or other members of your household, follow the steps outlined in this publication:

- 1. Identify the problem. Find out what is making you sick. Verify and describe the hazardous conditions. Ask for your local government to make an inspection for code violations.**
- 2. Identify who is responsible for the problem.**
- 3. Develop a plan of action.**

Document what you have done and what the problem is. Contact your Landlord/property manager in writing asking them to take care of the problem, for example to spray for cockroaches or find the source of moisture in the case of mold. In your letter, provide a reasonable deadline by which you expect to hear from the Landlord or have the repairs made. If the Landlord does not respond, you will need to make some decisions:

- How serious is the problem?**
- How much documentation do you have that the problem is with your home and is the responsibility of your Landlord?**
- Can you and your household handle the risk you will take in fighting back? Even though you may have the law on your side a Landlord could still try to evict you or engage in other behavior that would make you and your family uncomfortable.**

You and your household will have to weigh all of these and other factors that are important to you. Fighting back and advocating for yourself until the necessary repairs are made may take a while. It is also possible that your Landlord will respond once he or she knows that you have all the facts to support your request.

Understand that you may not be alone. You may have sympathetic neighbors who want to support and/or join you in your effort. And if you have an organization near you like Housing Rights, Inc., you may be able to turn to it for support and help.

Each situation in which this a person's home making them sick is unique. There is no magic or simple answer. If you follow the steps outlined in this publication you will be able to be very clear when you ask for what you need.

This publication is targeted mainly to Renters. Homeowners may benefit from some of the practical tips and resources.

When you believe that the builder of a property is responsible in whole or part, you will need to consult with a attorney or expert in the area.

When you believe that your Landlord is responsible in whole or part, follow the steps outlined above and consult with an attorney.

Special Issues

People with Disabilities: Sometimes, for someone with a disability, things that would not bother other people, pose a problem. Both State and Federal law require Landlords to make reasonable accommodations (change their policies, practices or procedures) to provide a Renter with a disability equal access and enjoyment of their home as for Renters who don't have a disability. They are also required by law to allow a Renter to make a reasonable modification to their home if the Renter pays for it (unless the housing in question has a federal subsidy, then the housing provider may be responsible for paying for the modification).

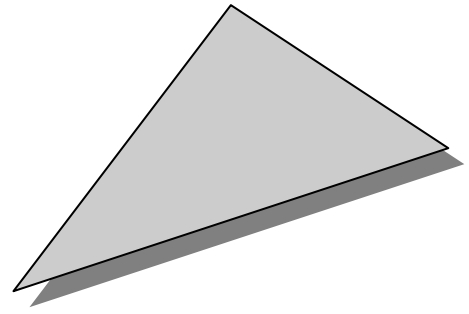
Reasonable Accommodation: A Renter may ask a Landlord at any time and for any number of times for a change in a policy, practice, or procedure if the change is necessary for the Renter with the disability to have equal access. The accommodation must be related to the disability not just personal preference and it must be reasonable. In other words, a Landlord cannot be asked to change the nature of his/her business, the accommodation must not cost a lot of money and must be possible to do.

Reasonable Modification: A Renter may ask a Landlord to make changes to the building. This could include putting in a ramp, widening doors, putting in doorbells designed for people who cannot hear. The Renter, by law would have to pay for the modification. The modification would have to be "undone" if it would interfere with the next renters use of the home. Lifting kitchen counters would be required to be "undone". Taking out a ramp would not. A Landlord may only refuse if the modification is not needed because of the Renter's disability or if it is impossible. The Landlord can require that lawfully licensed and professionals perform the work.

Environmental Illness (EI): Sometimes a person's home makes them sick because they have Environmental Illness (or Multiple Chemical Sensitivities). That is, they experience a serious and potentially life threatening allergic type reaction to substances in our environment that do not bother most people. This is a very misunderstood condition and can be verified by a medical professional (Editor's Note: a housing provider, that is a Landlord, cannot ask a person with a disability the nature/diagnosis or severity of their disability. They can only ask for verification that the person has a disability as defined by law and that the accommodation or modification that is being requested is related to the disability.)

Example: A person with EI becomes very sick around carpets because of the chemicals used in them. She asks the Landlord to remove the carpet in her apartment. The Landlord would be required by law to allow the Renter to remove the carpet at her expense. Another person with EI, is allergic to new carpets. The Landlord is replacing the carpet in all of his/her properties. The Renter asks that a different type of carpet be installed that doesn't contain the chemical that makes him sick. The Landlord would have to accommodate the Renter unless the alternative carpet was unavailable or cost a lot more. The Landlord would have to negotiate with the Renter to come up with a mutually agreeable solution.

Resources



- Housing Rights, Inc. Lawyer Referral Service: 1-800261-2298
 - iLawyer.com: National Referral Resource for an Attorney Referral
 - www.aarp.org: American Association for Retired Persons
 - www.aging-parents-and-elder-care.com
 - www.bchealthguide.org/kbase/topic/special/zp3199/sec1.htm: British Columbia Health Information
 - www.bchealthguide.org/kbaltindex.asp: Same
 - www.cdc.gov/nasd: Center for Disease Control/National Ag Safety Database
 - www.centerforhealthyhousing.org
 - www.ei-resource.org: Environmental Illness Resource
 - www.fema.gov: Federal Emergency Management Agency
 - www.housingrights.com/nationalcontacts.htm: Information regarding legal services and fair housing agencies throughout the country
 - www.pai.ca.org: Protection and Advocacy in California, legal assistance for people with disabilities
 - www.redcross.org
 - www.Rentersrights.info: Renter Self Advocacy website
- Local to Alameda, Contra Costa and San Francisco Counties in California:
- Alameda County Code & Inspection (for nuisance and property conditions)(510) 670-5408
 - Alameda County Environmental Health (roaches, rodent) (510) 567-6700
 - Alameda County Public Health Dept (510) 267-8000
 - Alameda County Vector Control (rodents, wasps, bees) (510) 567-6800
 - Antioch Codes and Inspections (925) 779-7065
 - Concord Codes and Inspections (925) 671-3107
 - Richmond Codes and Inspections (510) 620-6868
 - Walnut Creek Codes and Inspections (925) 943-5834
 - Berkeley Codes & Inspections (510) 981-5444
 - Berkeley Vector Control (510) 644-6510
 - CCC Building Inspection (925) 646-4108
 - CCC Health Department (925) 646-2521
 - CCC Vector Control (925) 685-9301
 - Children’s Environmental Health Program (lead) (415) 554-8930
 - City of Fremont (510) 494-4885
 - City of Hayward Building Inspection (510) 583-3642
 - Contra Costa County Vector Control (925) 685-9301
 - Emeryville Building Inspections (510) 596-4315
 - Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (lead in paint) (510) 567-8281
 - Oakland Codes and Compliance (510) 238-3381
 - Oakland Fire Hazard (510) 238-3852
 - PG&E (gas leaks and gas appliances) (800) 743-5000
 - Piedmont Building Inspection (510) 420-3050
 - Richmond Fire Hazard (510) 307-8037
 - San Leandro Code Enforcement (510) 577-3435
 - San Pablo Code Enforcement (510) 215-3018
 - SF Dept. of Building Inspection (415) 558-6220
 - SF Dept. of Public Health (415) 252-3800
 - UC Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (415) 206-4320

Home Safety Checklist

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Smoke Alarms

- Is there one located on each floor of the home?
- If battery operated, do you check the battery periodically and replace it yearly?
- If electrical, do you check periodically for proper operation?

Fire Extinguishers

- Easily accessible?
- Fully charged?
- Is it within the expiration date?
- Deadbolts
- Installed on all exterior doors?

PLUMBING

Hoses and Connections

Are the following periodically checked to see if they are secure and leak-free?

- Hot water tank
- Dishwasher
- Washing machine
- Icemaker

ELECTRICAL

- Are extension cords overloaded?
- Are extension cords removed from under rugs or furniture?
- If older home, is the wiring up to code?
- Do you have surge protector bars on air conditioners, entertainment equipment and computers?

HEATING SYSTEM

- Is your furnace cleaned and checked annually?
- Are the filters changed regularly?

CHIMNEY/FIREPLACE

- Are they cleaned and checked annually?
- Is the damper functioning properly?
- Are screen/doors in fireplace properly installed?

FROZEN PIPE PREVENTION

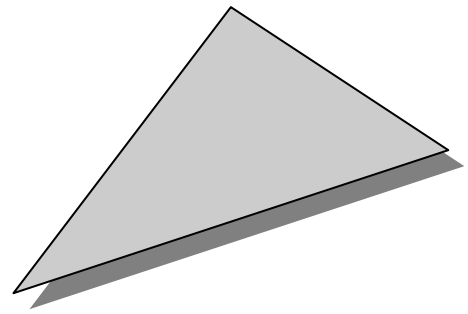
- Is home heated while on winter vacations?
- Do you disconnect the garden hose and shut off outside water faucets when the temperature drops to freezing?

ROOF

- Is the roof in good condition?
- Are gutters cleaned every autumn to help prevent roof leaks?

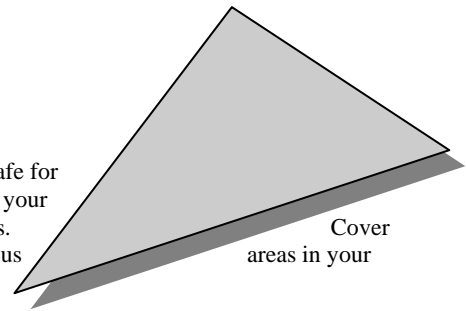
MISCELLANEOUS

- Are all your steps/sidewalks level and intact?
- Are there secured railings for your steps?
- Is flammable material properly stored? (Example: Be sure clothes are not stored near hot water heater.)
- Are surrounding trees healthy?
- Is your house clear from any hanging tree limbs?
- Is your in-ground pool fenced in?
- Are there locking gates on decks connected to swimming pools?
- Are matches stored out of the reach of children?
- Are all the cabinets in your home child proof (cleansers and sharp objects are out of reach)?
- Do you check the safety and condition of your outdoor deck on a yearly basis? (Look for rot; check for stability; treat annually with water sealer.)
- Do you repair loose or missing grout or caulking in tub/shower area to prevent deterioration of tiles?



Childproofing Your Home

As your baby becomes more active, it is important that you make sure your home is safe for him or her to explore. Begin by getting down on the floor and seeing your home from your baby's eye level. Babies like to chew on electrical cords and put their fingers in outlets, or tape down cords and buy covers for outlets. Here are some tips for making dangerous home safer for your baby.



Bathrooms

Bathrooms are extremely dangerous because:

- Babies can topple into the toilet and drown.

- Babies can turn on the hot water faucet in the bathtub and get burned quickly.

- Many items kept in the bathroom, like mouthwash and finger nail polish remover, are poisonous.

You either can make your bathroom safer or you can put a latch high up on the door to keep your baby out.

To childproof the bathroom:

- Keep hazardous items in high places, out of your baby's reach.

- Put a safety latch on the toilet seat.

- Put a safety cover on the faucet handle.

- Turn down the hot water temperature in your home to 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Water Safety

Even though your child can sit up on his or her own, never leave him or her alone in the bathtub, for children can easily drown in a few inches of water.

If you have a swimming pool or hot tub:

- Have a childproof cover in place at all times.

- Make sure there is a fence around the pool or hot tub.

- Keep your door leading to the pool or hot tub closed and locked.

- If you visit a friend with a pool or hot tub, make certain the cover is on and the gate is locked or never let your child out of your sight.

- Remember that even children who have had swimming lessons are never water safe. They must be supervised at all times when around water.

Kitchens

Kitchens have a number of potential safety hazards:

- Hot items on the stove can spill and burn your baby.

- Drawers and dishwashers can have sharp objects like knives and scissors in them.

- Detergents, which are often kept under the sink, are poisonous.

You either can make your kitchen safer or you can put up a gate to keep your baby out of the area.

To childproof the kitchen:

- Place dangerous and poisonous objects up high, out of your baby's reach.

- Always keep dishwasher doors locked shut and don't leave sharp knives inside.

- Put safety latches on drawers and cupboard doors.

Garages and Storage Areas

Garages and other storage areas contain dangerous items, therefore it is important that you:

- Never leave pails around that are filled with water, for babies easily can fall in and drown.

- Put detergents, paints, oils, paint thinner, gasoline and other dangerous products up very high or in locked cabinets.

Other Home Safety Issues

There are a number of things that you can do to make your home safer in the event of an earthquake or other emergency.

- Make sure your water heater is secure.

- Have a fire extinguisher easily accessible.

- Have bottled water on hand -- you should have one gallon per person per day to last up to three days.

- Store canned and dry foods.

- Have a battery operated radio and batteries.

- Make sure flashlights are easily accessible and that you have extra batteries.

- Make sure you have a first aid kit.

- Have a crescent wrench that can be used to turn off the gas and/or water.

- Bolt large furniture to the wall.

- Do not put beds close to objects that could fall and cause injury.

- Have blankets and warm clothes.

- Keep large plastic bags on hand.

This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace the advice of your doctor or health care provider. We encourage you to discuss with your doctor any questions or concerns you may have.

Checklist

Is your loved one's home safe?

According to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, more than 600,000 older Americans are treated each year in hospital emergency rooms for injuries at home. Many of these injuries result from hazards that are easy to overlook, but easy to fix. By taking some simple steps to correct them, many injuries could be prevented.

Use this checklist to spot possible safety problems. Check YES or NO to answer each question. Then go back over the list and take action to correct the items that need attention.

When evaluating your loved one's home, be sure to get his or her cooperation and agreement before installing equipment or changing surroundings. It usually helps to explain the reason for the changes before making them.

This checklist is organized by areas in the home. However, some potential hazards are in more than just one area of a home. These are highlighted at the beginning of the checklist and short reminders are included in other sections of the checklist.

-- All Areas of the Home --

In all areas of the home, check all electrical and telephone cords; rugs, runners and mats; telephone areas; smoke detectors; electrical outlets and switches; light bulbs; space heaters; woodburning stoves; and your emergency exit plan.

ELECTRICAL OUTLETS and SWITCHES

Are any outlets and switches unusually warm or hot to the touch? *Unusually warm or hot outlets or switches may indicate that an unsafe wiring condition exists.*

YES ___ NO ___ If Yes, where _____

-- Unplug cords from outlets and do not use the switches.

-- Have an electrician check the wiring as soon as possible.

Do all outlets and switches have cover plates so that no wiring is exposed? *Exposed wiring presents a shock hazard.*

YES ___ NO ___ If Yes, where _____

-- Add a cover plate.

Does any outlet have smudge marks around the socket where plugs are inserted? *Smudge marks are an indicator that an electrical short has occurred in a plug that was inserted, inside the socket itself, or in both places.*

YES ___ NO ___ If Yes, where _____

-- Unplug all cords from the outlet.

-- Either replace the outlet yourself or call a qualified electrician to replace it.

-- Find the plug that was involved in the short and repair or replace it, if necessary.

Are light bulbs the appropriate size and type for the lamp or fixture? *A bulb of too high wattage or the wrong type may lead to fire through overheating. Ceiling fixtures, recessed lights, and "hooded" lamps will trap heat.*

YES ___ NO ___ If Yes, where _____

-- Replace with a bulb of the correct type and wattage. (If you do not know the correct wattage, use a bulb no larger than 60 watts.)

ELECTRICAL and PHONE CORDS

Are lamp, extension, and telephone cords placed out of the flow of traffic? *Cords stretched across walkways may cause someone to trip.*

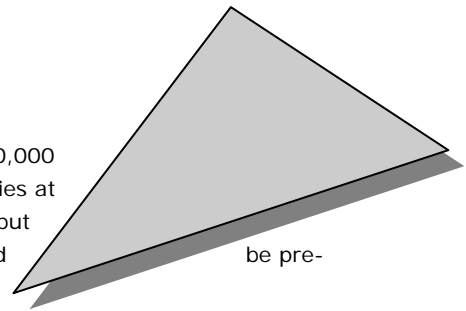
YES ___ NO ___ If Yes, where _____

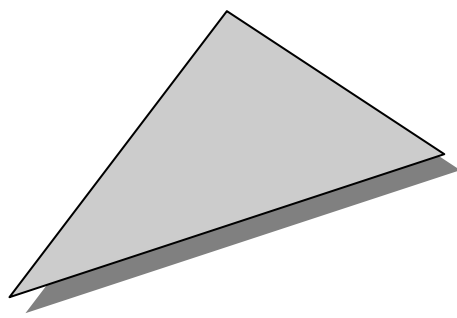
-- Arrange furniture so that outlets are available for lamps and appliances without the use of extension cords.

-- If you must use an extension cord, place it on the floor against a wall where people cannot trip over it.

-- Move the phone so that telephone cords will not lie where people walk.

Are cords out from beneath furniture and rugs or carpeting? *Furniture resting on cords can damage them,*





IF DISASTER STRIKES

If disaster strikes
Remain calm and patient. Put your plan into action.

Check for injuries
Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people.

Listen to your battery-powered radio for news and instructions
Evacuate, if advised to do so. Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.

Check for damage in your home...

- Use flashlights—do not light matches or turn on electrical switches, if you suspect damage.
- Check for fire, fire hazards and other household hazards.
- Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.
- Shut off any other damaged utilities.
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline and other flammable liquids immediately.

Remember to...

- Confine or secure your pets.
- Call your family contact—do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.
- Check on your neighbors, especially elderly or disabled persons.
- Make sure you have an adequate water supply in case service is cut off.
- Stay away from downed power lines.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community and Family Preparedness Program and the American Red Cross Community Disaster Education Program are nationwide efforts to help people prepare for disasters of all types. For more information, please contact your local emergency management office and American Red Cross chapter. This brochure and other preparedness materials are available by calling FEMA at 1-800-480-2520, or writing: FEMA, P.O. Box 2012, Jessup, MD 20794-2012. Publications are also available on the World Wide Web at: FEMA's Web site: <http://www.fema.gov>
American Red Cross Web site: <http://www.redcross.org>

Ask for: Are You Ready?, Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit and Food & Water in an Emergency.

Local sponsorship provided by:

September 1991
FEMA L-151
800-480-2520

Your Family Disaster Plan

EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SPILL

3 Complete This Checklist

- Post emergency telephone numbers by phone (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).
- Teach children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
- Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas and electricity at the main switches.
- Check if you have adequate insurance coverage.
- Teach each family member how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type), and show them where it's kept.
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.
- Conduct a home hazard hunt.
- Stock emergency supplies and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
- Find the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster.

4 Practice and Maintain Your Plan

- Quiz your kids every six months so they remember what to do.
- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.

Year	Drill Date
_____	_____
_____	_____

- Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months.
- Test and recharge your fire extinguisher (according to manufacturer's instructions).
- Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

Jan. □	July □
Feb. □	Aug. □
Mar. □	Sep. □
Apr. □	Oct. □
May □	Nov. □
June □	Dec. □

Change batteries in _____ each year.

HOME HAZARD HUNT

During a disaster, ordinary objects in your home can cause injury or damage. Anything that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire is a home hazard. For example, a hot water heater or a bookshelf can fall. Inspect your home at least once a year and fix potential hazards.

Contact your local fire department to learn about home fire hazards.

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Working with neighbors can save lives and property. Meet with your neighbors to plan how the neighborhood could work together after a disaster until help arrives. If you're a member of a neighborhood organization, such as a home association or crime watch group, introduce disaster preparedness as a new activity. Know your neighbors' special skills (e.g., medical, technical) and consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as disabled and elderly persons. Make plans for child care in case parents can't get home.

If you're sure you have time:

- Shut off water, gas and electricity before leaving, if instructed to do so.
- Post a note telling of when you left and where you are going.
- Make arrangements for your pets.

Your Family Disaster Plan

Where will your family be when disaster strikes? They could be anywhere—

at work

at school

or in the car.

How will you find each other? Will you know if your children are safe?

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services—water, gas, electricity or telephones—were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.

Families can—and do—cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together as a team. Follow the steps listed in this brochure to create your family's disaster plan. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility.

EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least three days. Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit with items you may need in an evacuation. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffel bags or covered trash containers.

Include:

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that won't spoil.
- One change of clothing and footwear per person, and one blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications.
- Emergency tools including battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or traveler's checks.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- An extra pair of glasses.

Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller kit in the trunk of your car.

UTILITIES

Locate the main electric, gas, water service main and natural gas main. Learn how and when to turn these utilities off. Teach all responsible family members. Keep necessary tools near gas and water shut-off valves. Remember, turn off the utilities only if you suspect the lines are damaged or if you are instructed to do so. If you turn them off, you will need a professional to turn them back on.

4 Steps to Safety

1 Find Out What Could Happen to You

Contact your local emergency management or civil defense office and American Red Cross chapter—be prepared to take notes:

- Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
- Learn about your community's warning signals: what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- Ask about animal care after disaster. Animals may not be allowed inside emergency shelters due to health regulations.
- Find out how to help elderly or disabled persons, if needed.
- Next, find out about the disaster plan at your workplace, your children's school or day-care center and other places where your family spends time.

2 Create a Disaster Plan

Meet with your family and discuss what you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the danger of fire, flood and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.

- Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
- Pick two places to meet:
 1. Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
 2. Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.
- Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your contact's phone number.
- Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.

Fill out, copy and distribute to all family members

Family Disaster Plan

Emergency Meeting Place: _____

Meeting Place: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Family Contact: _____

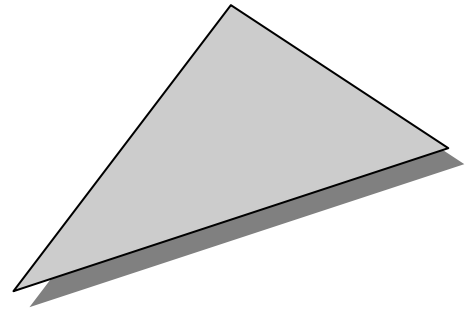
Phone: (____) _____ Phone: (____) _____

Landlord Obligations:

The Landlord is required to keep the unit habitable. To be habitable, a rental unit must have all of the following:

- ☑ Effective waterproofing and weather protection of the roof and exterior walls, including unbroken windows and doors.
- ☑ Plumbing, electricity, and gas facilities in good working order.
- ☑ A system that produces hot and cold running water and a sewage disposal system maintained in good working order.
- ☑ Adequate, safe and functional heating facilities.
- ☑ Electrical lighting, with wiring and electrical equipment which is maintained in good working order. Working electrical outlets in each room.
- ☑ Floors, stairways and railings maintained in good repair.
- ☑ An adequate number of containers for garbage, kept clean and in good repair.
- ☑ Building and grounds which are in every part clean, sanitary, and free of rubbish, garbage, rodents, and other pests.
- ☑ A working toilet, washbasin, and bathtub or shower, in a room which is ventilated.
- ☑ Operable dead bolt lock on each main swinging entry door.
- ☑ One useable telephone jack and the wiring to it.

California Civil Code section 1941.1



Renter Obligations:

A Renter must take reasonable care of the rented property and is responsible for repairing any damage caused by the Renter, the Renter's guests, children, or pets. In addition, the Renter must do all of the following:

- ☑ Keep the premises as clean and sanitary as the condition of the premises permits.
- ☑ Use the gas, electrical, and plumbing fixtures properly.
- ☑ Dispose of trash and garbage in a clean and sanitary manner.
- ☑ Not destroy, damage or deface the premises, or allow anyone else to do so.
- ☑ Not alter or remove any part of the rental unit, appliances, or any structure on the rented property, or allow anyone else to do so.
- ☑ Promptly inform the Landlord if repairs are needed.
- ☑ Allow the Landlord or his workers access to the unit to make repairs when repairs are necessary, upon 24-hours written notice and during reasonable business hours.

California Civil Code Section 1941.2

