

Garage-Safe Your Home

Rebecca Booker

Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department

The third leading cause of unintentional home injury-related death is fires and burns. Nearly 90 percent of all fatalities due to a burn or inhalation injury are associated with residential fires. 21 million medical visits each year result from injuries in the home. Many of these preventable incidents take place in the garage. The Home Safety Council and the Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department have put together this checklist to make that "other" room in your house- the garage- a safe place for you and your family.

Checklist for a Family-Safe Garage

- Organize all items in designated, easy-to-reach places so large piles don't accumulate.
- Store shovels, rakes, lawn chairs, bikes and other sharp and large objects on the wall to prevent trips and falls.
- Clear floors and steps of clutter, grease and spills.
- Keep children's playthings in one area and within their reach to prevent children from exploring potentially dangerous areas.
- Light your garage with maximum safe wattage as designated by light fixtures.
- Protect light bulbs near work areas with substantial guards to reduce risk of breakage and fire.
- Light stairs and install secure handrails or banisters.
- Make sure poisonous products such as pesticides, automotive fluids, lighter fluid, paint thinner, antifreeze and turpentine have child resistant caps, are clearly labeled and are stored either on a high shelf or in a locked cabinet.
- Do not use barbeque grills and electric generators inside the garage as they emit carbon monoxide (CO) and pose a fire hazard.
- Never leave cars running inside a garage to prevent CO poisoning.
- Store gasoline in small quantities and in a proper, tightly sealed container labeled "gasoline".
- Do not keep gasoline in a garage with an appliance that contains a pilot light.
- Keep combustibles at least three feet from any heat source.
- Mount a 5lb ABC fire extinguisher and stocked first aid kit in the garage and make sure every family member knows where they are and how to use them.
- Store pool chemicals according to the manufacturer's directions to prevent combustion and potential poisoning exposures.
- Do not overload outlets and don't use extension cords as a permanent source of electricity.
- Lock electrical supply boxes to prevent children from opening them.
- Clean garage of dust, cobwebs and trash, which can interfere with the electrical system.
- Properly secure shelving units to the wall. Make sure they are not overloaded. Store heavier items closest to the ground.
- Keep a sturdy step stool within easy reach to aid in reaching items stored up high.

For more information about making your home safe, take a home safety tour on the web at www.MySafeHome.org