



The home can be a perilous place for the elderly. Tripping, burning and fire potential can be caused by often overlooked objects. In spite of the serious danger and expense potential, these hazards can be easy and inexpensive to correct. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission offers the following suggestions.

- CHECK:** Are lamp, extension and telephone cords placed out of the flow of traffic?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** Cords stretched across walkways may cause someone to trip. 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 can't trip over it. Also, move the phone so that the cord doesn't rest where people walk.
- CHECK:** Are cords attached to the walls, baseboards, etc., with nails or staples?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** Nails or staples can damage cords, presenting fire and shock hazards. Use tape instead to attach cords to walls or floors.
- CHECK:** Are all small rugs and runners slip-resistant? CPSC estimates that in 1982, more than 2,500 people aged 65 and over were treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries that resulted from tripping over rugs and runners.  
**CPSC Recommendation:** Remove rugs and runners that tend to slide. For rugs that prove more stable, apply to the bottom double-faced adhesive carpet tape or rubber matting that can be cut in size. Check rugs and mats periodically to see whether backing needs to be replaced.
- CHECK:** Are emergency numbers posted on or near the telephone?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** In case of emergency, telephone numbers for the police, fire departments, and local poison control center, along with a neighbor's number, should be readily available. Write the numbers in large print and tape them to the phone, or place them near the phone where they can be easily seen.
- CHECK:** Are light bulbs the appropriate size and type for the lamp or fixture?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** A wrong bulb or one with dangerously excessive wattage may lead to fire through overheating. Also, ceiling fixtures, recessed lights, and "hooded" lamps will trap heat. Replace with a bulb of the correct type and wattage. If you do not know the correct wattage, use a bulb that requires no more than 60 watts.
- CHECK:** Are towels, curtains, and other things that might catch fire located away from the range?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** Placing or storing non-cooking equipment like potholders, dish towels or plastic utensils on or near the range may result in fires or burns. Store flammable and combustible items away from range and oven and remove any towels hanging on over handles. If towels hang close to a burner, change the location of the towel rack.

- CHECK:** Are hallways, passageways between rooms and other heavy traffic areas well lighted?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** Shadowed or dark areas can hide tripping hazards. Use the maximum wattage bulb allowed by the fixture and install night lights. Reduce glare by using frosted bulbs, indirect lighting, shades or gloves on light fixtures or partially closing blinds or curtains.
- CHECK:** Are bathtubs and showers equipped with non-skid mats, abrasive strips or surfaces that are not slippery?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** Wet, soapy tile or porcelain surfaces are especially slippery and may contribute to falls. Apply textured strips or appliques on the floors or tubs and showers. Use non-skid mats in the tub and shower and on the bathroom floor.
- CHECK:** Is water temperature 120 degrees or lower?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** Water temperature above 120 degrees can cause tap water scalds. If the water heater does not have a temperature setting, you can use a thermometer to check the temperature of the water at the tap. Lower the setting on the hot water heater to “low” or 120 degrees. If the hot water system is controlled by a landlord, ask to consider lowering the setting.
- CHECK:** Is a light switch located near the entrance to the bathroom?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** Install a night light. Inexpensive lights that plug into outlets are available.
- CHECK:** Are lamps or light switches within reach of each bed?  
**CPSC Recommendation:** Lamps or switches located close to each bed will enable people getting up at night to see where they are going. Rearrange furniture closer to switches or more lamps closer to beds and install night lights.