



Home Tips®



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Q & A

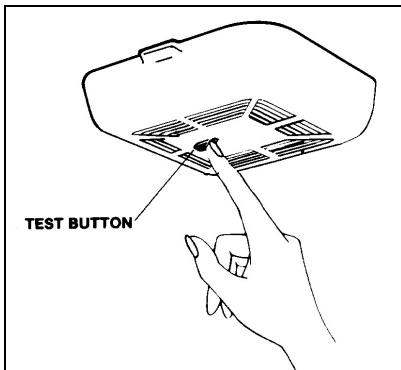
Home Safety Check?

Will you give us a list of safety items recommended in a home and how to maintain them?

Home safety is the most important part of home ownership. It is very important to make sure all safety items are working properly and will protect your family in case of an accident. It is a good idea to choose one day a year to perform a safety check, then mark it on your calendar. The following is a list of items that will insure your family's safety.

SMOKE DETECTORS

In newer homes, all smoke detectors are hard wired into the electrical system and are all connected together. If one



detector goes off, all will. This is very convenient if, in the middle of the night, you have a fire in the basement, and you are sleeping on the second floor. All smoke detectors also have a battery backup in case the power goes out. Unscrew the detectors

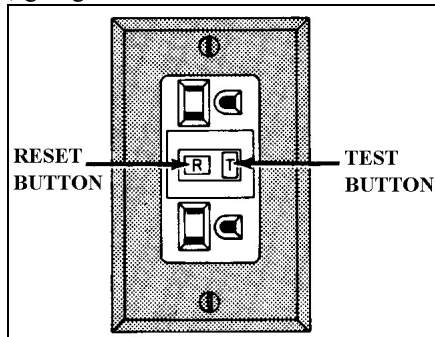
and replace the batteries once a year. Be sure to test them after you reinstall them.

GFCI ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

All newer homes are required to have ground fault circuit interrupter electrical outlets in the kitchen, bathrooms, unfinished basements, garages and outside. GFCI's are safety outlets that prevent

you from being electrocuted. They are the funny looking outlets with the buttons on them. Let's say you are washing dishes and have your hands in the water. Someone

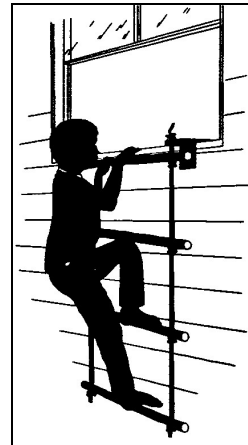
accidentally knocks the electric can opener into the sink. You will feel a jolt of electricity, but a GFCI will trip the circuit in 1/40th of a second and prevent you from being electrocuted. How do you know if the ground fault safety device is



working? There is a "Test" button and a "Reset" button on the outlet. Push the test button in and make sure the reset button pops out. When it does, the outlet and every outlet connected to it will be dead. You must push the reset button back in to reactivate the outlet. If you push the test button and nothing happens, the GFCI has burned out, and the outlet will need replacing. If your home does not have GFCI outlets, it is a very good idea to have them installed. You can purchase them from Lowe's or Home Depot for around \$15.00 each.

FIRE ESCAPE LADDER

What happens if you're upstairs sleeping and have a fire that blocks the bottom of the stairs? Being trapped with no way of escaping can be avoided. The solution is purchasing a chain or rope ladder that can be installed on a window sill. This will allow your family to safely escape and wait for the fire department on the outside of your home.



Home escape ladders come in two standard lengths—15 feet and 25 feet. The shorter length is adequate for most two story bedrooms, while the longer is used for three story rooms. Make sure that the ladder is easily deployed by the person who is meant to use it. Also check for the load limit. Ladders should be rated for at least 1,000 pounds. The cost of a home escape ladder ranges from \$30 to \$150.

There is not a large selection of places to find them locally. Try stores like Sam's Club or online.

You might try these websites:

http://www.safetythink.com/products/escape_ladders.htm

<http://www.fireescapesystems.com/>

<http://www.safelines.co.uk/products/fire-escape-ladders.htm>

After purchasing a ladder, make sure that it fits the specific window for which it's intended. If the ladder is for a child's room, have the child practice putting the ladder out the window. Then have them practice climbing out of a first floor window. Do this as part of a family fire drill.

HOME ESCAPE PLANS

Every home should have an escape plan in case of a fire. All family members should be included in the planning process. Draw a picture of your home floor plan. Mark the location of exits (two from every room, if possible), an outside meeting place and the closest telephone. Make plans for anyone with special needs, such as a baby, toddler or older person. Check the exits from each bedroom. If the second exit is a window, can it be opened? Can someone safely make it to the ground? Is an escape ladder needed? Tell your plan to the entire family. Have a family fire drill to practice the plan. Start with

