

# SAFE HABITAT



*A cura del  
Ministero dell'Interno  
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Ufficio Comunicazione Esterna  
In collaborazione con  
Comitato Sicurinsieme*



# SAFE HABITAT





# GAS

The gas doesn't have a form of its own, it expands indefinitely and it fills all the spaces available. The gas is the most common cause of fires and explosions. When used without precautions serious consequences may occur not just in one single apartment but a whole building may be involved.

If it spreads indoor , a spark is sufficient to cause devastating explosions.

**What you have to know:** the gases commonly used for housework are methane and LPG: when the premises are saturated by these gases, the oxygen necessary for vital functions fails and asphyxia occurs. The methane is lighter than the air and it tends to go up. The LPG is heavier than the air and it stratifies downwards.

## If you smell gas:

1. **Do not strike matches, do not cause sparks.** In the premises filled with gas do not turn on electrical appliances, do not ring the doorbell, do not use the telephone.
2. **Open the windows** to let air into the premises
3. Turn off the main gas tap or the LPG cylinder's tap. Brief all the family members, children included, on these manoeuvres.
4. **If you smell gas, turn off the circuit breaker.** If this is not placed in the room filled with gas. If this is the case, don't touch it.
5. If, in spite of this, the smell of gas persists, call the Fire Brigade, dial 115.

## Safety tips

- Place always outdoor the LPG full cylinders and do not store the empty ones in the basement.
- Whenever you leave the apartment for a short while or for a few days, and every night before going to bed, do not forget to turn off the main gas valve.

## Carbon monoxide (Co)

Carbon monoxide is a gas that you can't see, smell or taste. It is produced by gas or oil furnaces, space and water heaters, clothes dryers, ovens, wood stoves and other household appliances. To avoid brain damage, suffocation or death it must be dispelled through vent pipes and chimney



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flues. If your home is well sealed or not well ventilated, the levels of carbon monoxide in the air may easily rise to deadly levels. The symptoms are: tiredness, headaches, dizziness, nausea or vomiting and shortness of breath. Your skin may also turn pink or red in response to rising blood pressure.

## Safety tips

In the premises where a combustion occurs, a ventilation drive is mandatory. Then:

- Do not install gas stoves, wood stoves and water heaters in your bedroom.
- Use the chimney flue only for one purpose; if you don't, the carbon monoxide instead of being expelled outside may leak into the premises through an other opening.
- Have your fuel-burning appliances, furnace, vent pipe and chimney flue inspected and cleaned once a year.

## What to do

If carbon monoxide exhalation should occur or if they are suspected:

- Ventilate right away the premises, opening all the windows
- Evacuate the premises
- Remove the source of the production of the carbon monoxide
- Do not cause sparks or flames
- If necessary call the Fire Brigade (dial 115): if you can't speak Italian make sure someone notices you and have him on the phone.

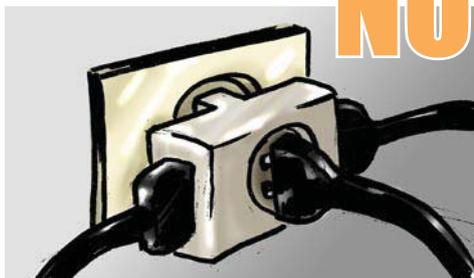


# ELECTRICITY

Electricity, the silent servant, can become a silent assassin.

## Safety tips

- Don't overload electrical outlets or sockets, in particular, the use of "octopus" outlets extension that accommodate several plugs (iron, heater etc.) is strongly discouraged. Do not exceed the capacity of the wiring system: over-



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- loaded electrical systems invite fire.
- Do not use light bulb wattage which is too high for the fixture. Look for the label inside each fixture which tells you the maximum wattage
  - Replace frayed or cracked cords on electrical appliances
  - Do not use hairdryers in the shower or in the bath tub
  - Do not use household appliances with wet hands
  - Do not use electrical appliances in damp premises (do not plug in the radio in the bathroom)
  - Do not repair or clean electrical appliances with power left on
  - Do not run electrical cords underneath carpets or furniture or twist them around a nail or hook
  - Do not tamper with the electrical system with the power left on
  - If a circuit breaker trips or a fuse blows frequently, immediately cut down on the number of appliances on that line

## What to do

In case of electrocution:

- Do not touch the victim until the power is on
- If you don't know where the circuit breaker is located try to pull the victim away from the electrical source touching him/her with electric insulators such as wooden or plastic tools.
- Ask for first aid: dial 1-1-8. If you can't speak Italian draw attention on what is going on and get someone to speak on the telephone
- If the victim is unconscious, he doesn't have heart-beat and doesn't breath, and you're up to it, apply resuscitation manoeuvre.

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# FALLS

Falls are the second leading cause of unintentional-injury death and most frequently the victims are older people and kids. Mostly they occur within our homes.

## Safety Tips

### Where kids are present

- Install window safety device and don't leave furniture or anything that can be climbed upon near a window
- Safety gates should be installed at all open stair-

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- ways: if a gate is not provided, place a barrier of some kind in front of the stairway that a child cannot climb over. Make sure the balcony's parapet, the handrail and the windowsill can't be climbed over by kids and make sure they can't lean out . If necessary make your balcony safer installing a net upon the handrail.

### For everybody

- Avoid foot-board and rugs. Do not use floor wax on the stairs
- Before climbing a step-ladder make sure it's safe, use it carefully and have always someone hold it firmly. While climbing down face the rungs; wear well-fitting shoes and avoid slippers while climbing up and down a stepladder
- Secure bathroom rugs with non-slip backing
- Apply non-slip surfaces and install grab bars in the bathtub and shower
- Install in your bathroom an emergency bell in case of a sudden illness
- If you live alone install a telephone in the bathroom
- While showering do not lock the bathroom's door or make sure it's always possible to open the door from outside





# POISONING

In every home there are a lot of substances that pose a health hazard. Store them out of reach of children and avoid any contact with food.

## Safety tips

- Corroding substances and toxicant such as WC cleaning products, metal polishers, solvents, paints and other poisons should be kept in a locked and very secure place at all the times
- Be sure that all medications, cleaning products and

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other poisons are stored high and out of reach of children. This also apply to any cleaning supplies, hair spray and other personal care items

- Keep all the products in original containers , never put potentially dangerous

products in something other than its original container, where it could be mistaken for something harmless.

- Store poisonous substances, chemicals and medicines separately. Keep all them apart.
- Do not remove the original label.

## What to do in case of ingestion of poison

- Don't waste precious time on old-fashioned treatments like milk or sticking fingers into the throat to cause vomit. Don't wait to see if sickness occurs - many poisons do damage that can't be seen right away.
- Try to identify the poison swallowed and if possible the quantity
- Keep the original container and take it along to the Emergency Room



# WATER

Generally speaking water leaks are not a health hazard but may cause extensive damage to your home and personal belongings.

## Safety tips

- Find out where the water shutoff valve is (usually is placed near the water meter) and how to open and close it and make sure everyone in your household knows it
- Remember to shut off the water supply if you'll be away from your home for several days. Usually the wheel-valves turn clock-wise to shut them off.
- Play in the kitchen should be discouraged at all times and children should never be in the kitchen unsupervised
- A lot of children get scald burns from hot foods and liquids so use the back burners on the stove and turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- In the bath tub never leave your kids unsupervised: just a few centimetres of water could cause death by drowning; the same goes for toy-swimming pools.

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# FIRES

Most of the times fires occur when the elementary safety rules are not observed.

## Safety tips

- When you cook wear tight-fitting clothing, avoid the synthetic ones and long hair must not be loose.
- Electric wiring must be carried out by a qualified electrician and state-of-the-art equipment. must be used
- Don't store items on the stove pot, as they could catch fire

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- Don't use alcohol to re-ignite fires (for instance while barbecuing): the container itself could explode in your hands
  - Install a chimney spark arrester in your fireplace to prevent roof fires
  - While decking out your Christmas tree be careful where you place it, and make sure the illuminations are of good quality and avoid sparks and/or flames can reach the tree even though the tree is a natural one.
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- Never smoke in bed. If you believe that you are immune from cancer, heart disease, emphysema and other ills, at least worry about burning to death
  - Be careful with candles. Never leave them unattended and don't go to sleep with them burning.

## **Safety tips**

One fourth of all fire-deaths of children are from fires started by children. Every year in Italy hundreds of children undergo deadly or disabling burns: 70% are under five year-old

- Don't keep your kid in your arms while cooking, drinking hot drinks or handling hot substances
- Place protections on your stove

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- Use the back burners
- Avoid cooking in long-handle pots and if you do, turn the handle backward
- Keep hot food in the middle of the tables, out of reach of the children
- Water temperature in the boiler must be kept below 50°Celsius. Run cold water in tub first, an then use hot water to warm to desired temperature
- The safest oven is the one placed as higher as possible and built-in
- Keep the iron out of reach of children
- Warming up baby's bottles in the microwave you are not fully aware of the real temperature of the contents
- Keep all matches and lighters out of hands of children: usually baby toys such as teddy bears and dolls' clothes are easily flammable.

## How to extinguish a fire

Read the instruction before the event. In the case you haven't done it as yet, do it now:

- Pull the pin
- Aim at the base of the fire
- Squeeze the top handle or lever
- Sweep from side to side

If you don't have an extinguisher you can use:

- Wool blanket (not an acrylic one, it would catch fire)
- Water (turn off the circuit breaker beforehand)
- If you can't extinguish the fire right away, do not insist

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- Close the room door where fire has started
- Turn off the circuit breaker and the main gas valve
- Go out and open the windows in the stair space. Do not forget your home keys
- Dial 1 1 5 – Fire Brigade: if can't speak Italian draw attention on what is going on so that someone will take care of it and rescue teams will get along in a matter of minutes
- Inform the operator if inside the apartment there are LPG cylinders or dangerous substances.
- Inform your neighbours to get ready to evacuate the building.
- Don't use elevators.
- Keep clear of the fire but stick around until firefighters get along

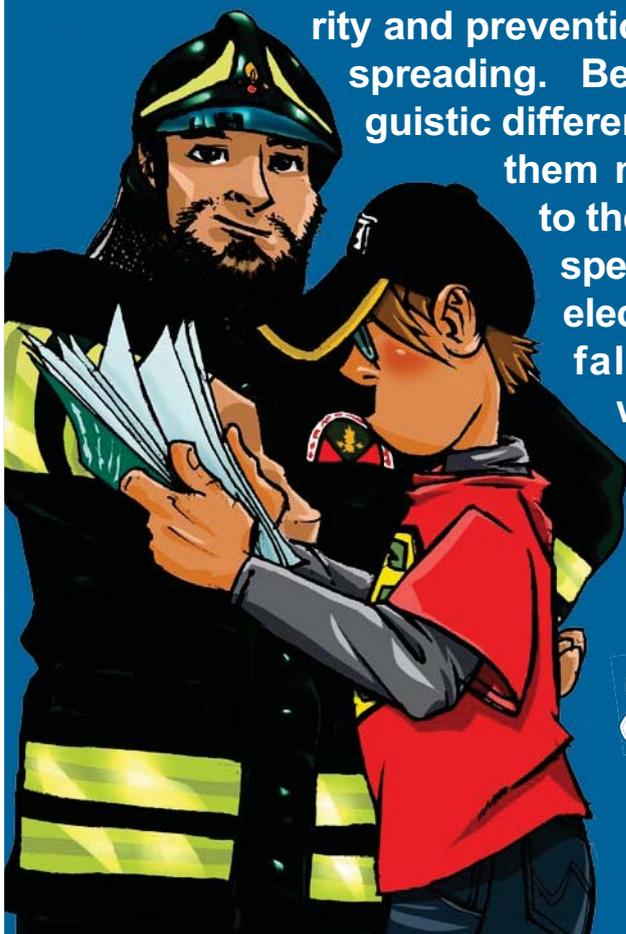
## **What to do in case of burns**

- If someone gets burns, immediately run cool water over the wounds for 5 to 10 minutes to ease the pain
- If the burn is blistered or charred, see a doctor immediately: protect with sterilized dressing.
- Do not put ice, burn ointments or anything besides water. Do not break blisters.
- If a person has been burned badly by fire take him/her immediately to the Emergency Room or dial 118.



In the context of the work dedicated to the schools and the families for the prevention of the domestic accidents, we have translated a synthesis dedicated to the several foreign language communities which live in our country.

These, with their various linguistic realities, meet difficulties in learning the rules in use, the rules of security and prevention which we are spreading. Besides, the linguistic difference, can expose them more than other to the daily risks. We speak about: gases, electrical hazards, falls, poisoning, water damages and fires.



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