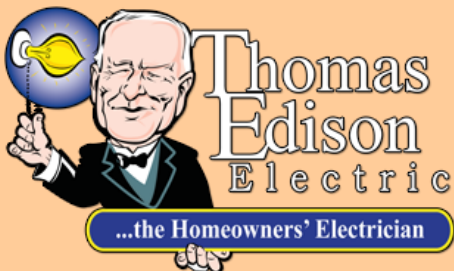




Safety For Older Consumers Home Safety Checklist



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Seniors and Injury in Canada

Falls cause injuries and death

Falls account for more than half of all injuries among Canadians 65 years and older. One third of community dwelling Canadian seniors experience one fall each year and half of those will fall more than once. The likelihood of dying from a fall related injury increases with age; among seniors, 20% of deaths related to injury can be traced back to a fall.

Hospitalization

Falls account for 34% of all injury-related hospital admissions and 85% of seniors' injury-related hospital admissions for seniors. 40% of seniors' falls results in hip fractures and half of those who break their hips will never recover full functioning; women sustain 75-80% of all hip fractures and one in five older adults will die within 12 months of suffering a hip fracture.

Where Injuries occur

Nearly half of all injuries among seniors occur at home. The bathroom and stairs are particularly hazardous due to the risk of slipping, tripping and stumbling.

Fear of Falling

Seniors who fall may limit their activities for fear of falling again. Yet by limiting activities, they are likely to lose strength and flexibility, and increase their risk of falling again. Maintaining physical activity is essential if you wish to prevent falls and injury.

Use this checklist to prepare for an emergency and to spot possible safety problems in your home.

Top Ten Safety Checklist for Older Consumers



Install smoke and Carbon Monoxide alarms throughout your home



Have fuel burning appliances including furnaces and chimneys inspected by a professional every year to make sure they are working properly and not leaking poisonous carbon monoxide.



Have an emergency escape plan and pre-arrange for a family member or caregiver to help you escape, if needed.



Install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters, or GFCIs in potential damp locations such as kitchen, bathroom, garage, near utility tubs, or sinks, and on the exterior of the house to protect against electrocution.



Keep a fire extinguisher handy in the kitchen in case of fire.



Make sure all medications, matches, and lighters are stored out of children's reach. Keep all medications in child-resistant enclosures.



Make sure there is good lighting inside and outside your home to help prevent falls.



Set your hot water heater to no more than 120 degrees F or 48.9 C to help prevent burns.



Make sure walking surfaces are flat, slip resistant, free of objects, and in good condition to avoid falls.



Keep ashtrays, smoking materials, candles, hot plates, and other potential fire sources away from curtains, furniture, blankets and other combustibles. Never leave them unattended

TIP



If you live alone, you may consider installing a Personal Respond System from Thomas Edison Electric. Contact us for more information 902-628-8720 or 902-436-0719

Prepare for an Emergency



Install smoke and carbon monoxide alarms throughout the house.



Have an emergency escape plan and pre-arrange for a family member or caregiver to help you escape the home in a fire, if needed.

- I have tested my smoke and CO alarms within the last month, and they are working properly.**

Alarms that can use voice warning may help you distinguish smoke alarms from CO alarms. If you are hearing-impaired and are unable to hear the sound from a smoke or CO alarms, install alarms with strobe lights to notify you during the day and use an assistive device that vibrates the bed and pillow to awaken you when the alarms sound at night.

- I have replaced the batteries in all my alarms within the last year.**

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms

- Smoke alarms are installed on every level of my home, outside sleeping areas and inside bedrooms. Carbon monoxide alarms are installed on every level of my home and outside sleeping areas.**

Smoke alarms are critical for the early detection of fire and could mean the difference between life and death. About two-thirds of home fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms.

All homes should also have carbon monoxide alarms installed. CO is an invisible and odorless gas that can kill you in minutes. Any fuel burning appliances in your home is a potential CO source, but even all electric homes could have sources of CO such as a car running in an attached garage or a portable generator running outside too close to the house. CO alarms should not be installed in basements, attics or garages unless they contain sleeping areas.



TIP



To remember to test your smoke and CO alarms twice a year. Make a habit of testing them when you turn your clocks forward in the Spring and back in the Fall.

Emergency Escape Plan



Emergency Escape Plan

- I have an emergency escape plan. Once a fire starts, it spreads rapidly.**
An escape plan can reduce the amount of time required for you and your family to get out safely, and can improve your chances of surviving a fire or similar emergency. To the extent possible, identify two ways to escape from every room and avoid escape routes that require the use of escape ladders or similar items that could put you at risk of a fall. If there is a fire in your home, do not waste time trying to save property. Get out as fast as possible, and remember: ONCE OUT—STAY OUT!
- I have practiced my fire escape plan with my family within the last six months, during both day and night.**
- Be sure windows can be unlocked and opened, and security bars can be released from within the home to allow for escape.**

Emergency Contact Information

- Emergency numbers are posted on or near all telephones.**
Make certain that telephone numbers are readily available for the Police, Fire Department, and Local Poison Control Center, along for the numbers of your doctor(s) and a trusted neighbor or family member. If you have impaired vision or difficulty seeing the numbers on a regular telephone, choose a phone that has large, lighted number keys. If you have trouble hearing, choose a telephone that has options for hearing impaired individuals.
- Telephones are positioned low enough so I can reach them if I have an accident that leaves me unable to stand.**
Keeping telephones at a low height is helpful in the event that you have an accident that leaves you unable to stand. As an alternative, consider obtaining a wearable medical alert device that provides a “Call for Help” push button.
- A telephone is located in my bedroom in case a fire traps me there.**



Check Throughout The Home



Make sure walking surfaces are flat, slip resistant, free of objects, and in good condition to avoid falls.



Install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters, or GFCIs in potentially damp locations such as kitchen, bathroom, garage, near utility tubs or sinks, and on the exterior of the house to protect against electrocution.

Walking Surfaces

- All walking surfaces are free of electrical cords, boxes, furniture, appliances, and other objects that could pose a tripping hazard, especially in the event of an emergency or fire.** Falls are associated with more than half of all product-related visits to the emergency room among adults aged 65 to 74, and with more than three quarters of visits among adults 75 years and older. Tripping over loose carpets, cords or other obstacles on the floor is a common fall scenario.
- All flooring is in good condition, is flat and uniform, and is slip-resistant or is covered with slip-resistant carpeting, rugs, mats, or similar materials.** Slip-resistant surfaces are especially important in potentially wet locations such as bathroom, kitchens, and entryways. There should be no loose floorboards, missing tiles, or similar problems that could pose a tripping hazard. Carpeting should be low pile and free of tares, holes, or wear that could cause slips or trips.

Steps and Stairways

- All steps are in good condition, have flat, even surfaces and are free of objects that could pose a tripping hazard.**
- All stair treads are in good condition, and have slip-resistant surfaces such as dense, low pile carpeting or slip-resistant strips that are securely attached to the steps.**
- Light Switches are located at both the top and bottom of the stairs.** If no other light is available, keep an operating flashlight in a convenient location.
- All stairs have solidly mounted handrails that run continuously along the full length of the stairs on both sides. Handrails are easily graspable.**



TIP



To help avoid taking a misstep, you can paint wooden or concrete steps with a strip of contrasting colour on the edge of each step or on the top and bottom steps. Don't rush going up and down stairs. Rushing is a major cause of falls.

Lighting

- **Walkways and rooms in which I am likely to be reading—for example, the bedroom, bathrooms and the kitchen—are especially well-lit or have additional lighting available.**

Lighting is an important factor in preventing falls since areas that are poorly lit or in shadow can hide slipping and tripping hazards. Indirect lighting or frosted bulbs can be used to reduce glare.

- **All light bulbs are of the appropriate wattage and type for the lamp or light fixture in which they were installed.**

For those fixtures that do not identify the correct wattage, installed bulbs should not exceed 60 watts, or 25 watts for bulbs with a miniature base. Consider using compact-fluorescent or similar energy efficient bulbs, which produce more light per watt than incandescent bulbs.

Electrical Outlets and Switches

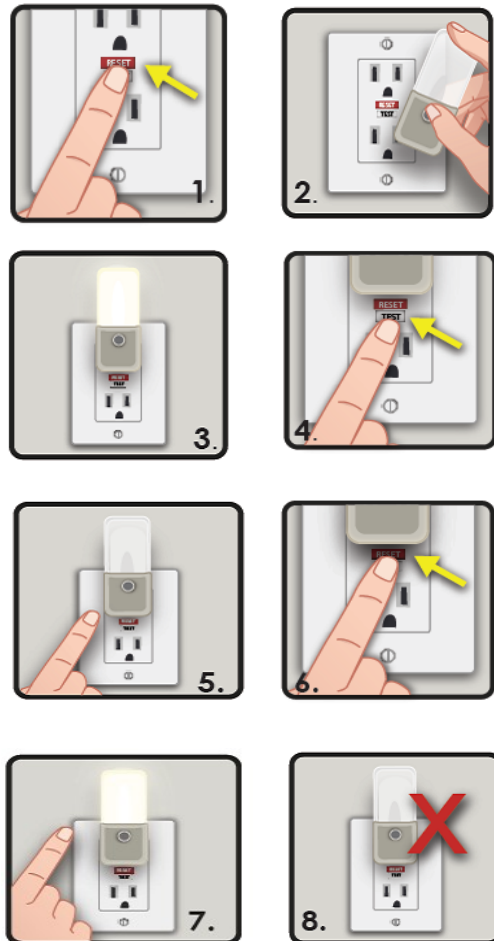
- No electrical outlets or switches are unusually warm or hot to the touch.
Hot or unusually warm electrical outlets or switches may indicate an unsafe wiring condition. Stop using these electrical outlet and have an electrician check them as soon as possible.
- All electrical outlets and switches have cover plates installed so no wiring is exposed.
- Unused receptacles have safety covers installed to prevent access by young children.



- **All electrical outlets that are located in potentially damp locations, such as the kitchen, bathroom, garage, near the utility tub or sink and on the exterior of the house, have Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters, or GFCIs installed to protect against electrical shock.**

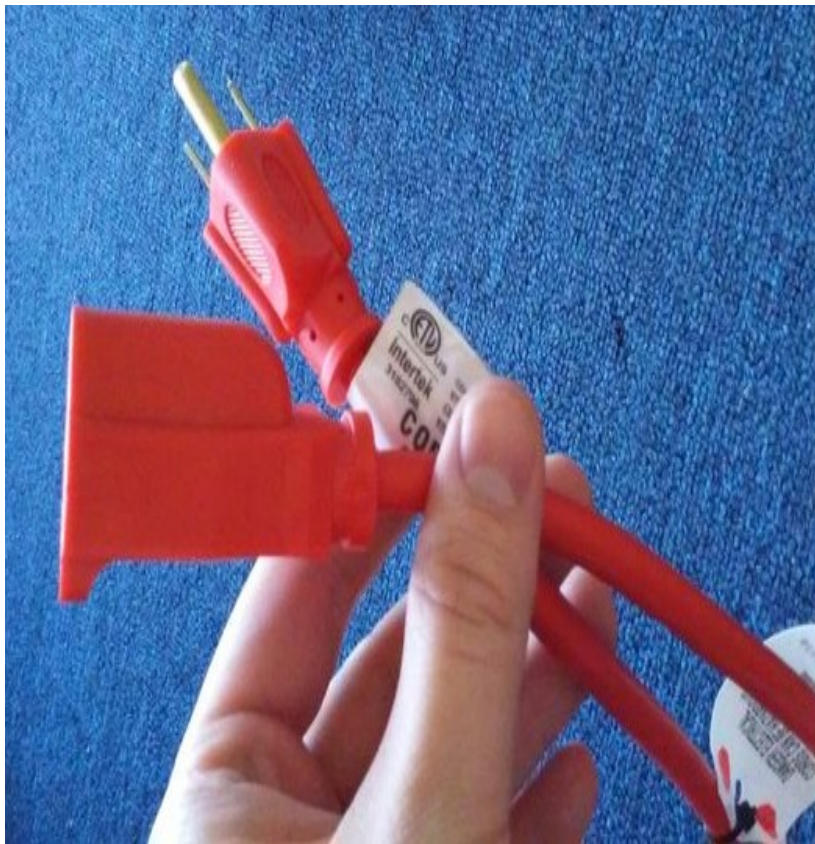
- **I have tested all GFCI receptacles within the last month and have found them to be working properly.**

GFCI receptacles can provide power even when they are no longer providing shock protection. Test a GFCI receptacle monthly by plugging a night light or lamp into the receptacle and switching it on. When you press the TEST button on the GFCI receptacle, the RESET button should pop forward and the light should go out. Pressing the RESET button should restore the power outlet. If it does not, contact an electrician to have the GFCI receptacle replaced.



Electrical Cords

- All electrical, extension and telephone cords are out of the flow of foot traffic since they pose a tripping hazard.
- Electrical cords are not beneath furniture, rugs, or carpeting. Cords are not pinched against the wall by furniture and are not wrapped tightly around objects.
- All electrical cords are in good condition and are free of damage such as fraying, cracking, and staple or nail holes.
- Extension cords are not overloaded. In other words, the total wattage of all appliances plugged into an extension cord does not exceed the rated capacity of the extension cord.
If the cord rating is exceeded, switch to a higher rated cord or unplug some of the appliances. Discard older extension cords that use small 18 gauge wires.
- All extension cords have polarized plug receptacles; that is, receptacles with one wide plug slot and one narrow plug slot.



Check Kitchens



Keep a fire extinguisher
Handy in the kitchen in
case of fire

- **A fire extinguisher is in the kitchen in case of fire. To operate the fire extinguisher, remember the word PASS:**



1. Pull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you and release the locking mechanism.
2. Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
3. Squeeze the level slowly and evenly.
4. Sweep the nozzle from side to side.

Extinguishers should be less than 10 years old and free of dust and grease

- **The Area around the range should be free of grease build-up and clutter, including towels, curtains, potholders, and other objects that might catch fire. Avoid wearing loose fitting clothes with flowing or oversized sleeves while cooking.**
- **Kitchen ventilation systems or range exhausts are functioning properly.** Indoor air pollutants and CO may accumulate to unhealthy levels in a kitchen with gas appliances. Use ventilation or open windows to clear the air of vapors and smoke. Never use stove to heat home.

- **Always stay within view of food cooking on the stovetop.** Cooking is the number one cause of home fires and home injuries. The leading contributor to these fires is unattended cooking.
- Electrical appliances and extension cords are away from the sink and other water sources and are away from hot surfaces such as the stove.
- Electrical receptacles that supply countertop appliances, such as coffeemakers and toasters, are protected by ground fault circuit interrupters, or GFCIs. **Test all GFCI receptacles monthly to make sure they are working properly.**
- **Kitchen lighting is bright and even, especially near the stove, sink and countertop areas.**
- **A stable step stool or ladder with a handrail is easily accessible for reaching high items.** Standing on chairs, boxes, or other makeshift items to reach high shelves can result in falls. Buy a step stool or ladder if you don't have one. Choose a sturdy one with handrails that you can grasp while standing on the top step. Before climbing on any step stool or ladder, make sure it is fully opened and stable on a flat surface. Discard step stools or ladders that are not stable or have broken parts.

TIP



Use heat-resistant oven mitts rather than potholders; they provide a better grip on hot containers and give you better protection against splatters and steam. If you do experience a burn, immerse in cool water. (Don't use ice or butter)

Check Living Rooms & Family Rooms



Have fuel burning appliances, including furnaces and chimneys, inspected by a professional every year to make sure they are working properly and not leaking poisonous carbon monoxide.



- All chimneys have been professionally inspected and cleaned within the last year, and chimney openings are clear of leaves and other debris that could clog them.**
A clogged chimney can cause poisonous carbon monoxide (CO) to enter your home. Burning wood in a fireplace can cause creosote, an highly flammable substance, to build up inside the chimney. This material can ignite and result in a serious chimney fire.
- All portable space heaters and wood burning heating equipment are at least 3 feet from the walls, furniture, curtains, rugs, newspapers, and other flammable or combustible materials.**
- All portable space heaters are stable and located away from walking spaces you use to get to other parts of the home.**
- The surface of each fireplace is fireproof, and all wood burning heating equipment is installed on fireproof flooring or on an approved non-combustible floor protector.**
Burning material can be ejected from an open fireplace. Fire resistant hearthrugs, made of wool, fiberglass, or other synthetics, are readily available to protect the area in front of the fireplace.
- Keep ashtrays, smoking materials, candles, hot plates and other potential fire sources away from curtains, furniture, blankets and other combustibles. Never leave them unattended.**



Check Bathrooms



Make sure all medications are stored in child resistant enclosures and are clearly marked to prevent children from accessing the medications and being poisoned.

- All medications are stored in child resistant enclosures and are clearly marked.
If grandchildren or other young people are visitors, purchase medicines in containers with child resistant caps, and close the caps properly after each use. Store all medication out of reach of children. Many poisonings occur when children visiting grandparents go through the medicine cabinet or their grandmothers purse. Only request non-resistant enclosures if you are physically unable to use child resistant bottles. Medications that are not clearly and accurately labeled can be easily mixed up, causing you to take the wrong medicine or to miss a required dosage of medicine. Be sure that all containers are clearly marked with the contents, doctor's instructions, expiration date, and patient's name. Dispose of outdated medicines properly. Because of their environmental impact, disposing expired medication in the toilet may be an acceptable method. Your doctor or pharmacist can advise you on the best method of disposal.



- All bathtubs and showers are equipped with non-skid mats, abrasive strips, or surfaces that are not slippery and have at least one secure and easily graspable grab bar.
- The bathroom floor is slip-resistant or is covered with secure slip-resistant materials.
- All hair dryers, shavers, curling irons, and other small electrical appliances that are not currently in use are unplugged.
- Electrical receptacles in the bathroom are protected by ground fault circuit interrupters, or GFCIs. Test all GFCI receptacles monthly to make sure they are working properly.



TIP



Some tile and bath cleaning products actually increase slipperiness. Be careful when using such products.

Check Bedrooms



Keep ashtrays, smoking materials, candles, hot plates, and other potential fire sources away from curtains, furniture, blankets, and other combustibles.

- Ash trays, smoking materials, candles, hot plates, and other potential fire sources are located away from curtains, furniture, beds and bedding. Burns associated with personal use products were the most frequently reported cause of accidental death among seniors. Smoking is one of the major contributors to this problem. Never smoke in bed. Remove sources of heat or flame from areas around beds, and do not leave the room or fall asleep while a candle is burning. Use large deep ashtrays for smoking debris, and let the contents cool before disposal.
- A flashlight is within reach of the bed in case of power outage.
- A telephone is within reach of the bed in case of emergency.
- My mattress meets the new federal flammability standards. Newer mattresses are more resistant to fires from open flames such as candles, lighters, and matches, and have tags indicating that they meet the federal standard.



- Electrically heated blankets are not folded, covered by other objects, or “tucked in,” when in use. The power cord is not pinched or crushed by the bed, between a wall or floor.** Objects that cover the blanket’s heating elements or controls can cause overheating. Do not allow anything, including other blankets, comforters, and even sleeping pets, on top of the electric blanket while it is in use. “Tucking in” electric blankets also can cause excessive heat buildup and start a fire. The edges of your electric blanket should hang freely over the sides and end of the bed. If you use a heating pad, always turn it off before you go to sleep. It can cause serious burns even at relatively low settings.
- As recommended by the fire safety community, smoke alarms are placed inside and just outside bedrooms and they have been tested within the last month and are working. CO alarms are located outside sleeping areas, have been tested within the last month, and are working properly. The batteries have been replaced within the last year.



TIP



Make sure your bed is not too high or low, so that it is easy to get in and out of it. You can purchase short bed rails to steady yourself when getting out of bed.

Check Basements, Garages, Workshops, and Storage Areas



Set your hot water heater to No more than 49 degrees Celsius, 120 degrees Fahrenheit to help prevent burns.

- ❑ **The Water heater is set to no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit.**
Water above 49 degrees Celsius, 120 degrees Fahrenheit, can burn your skin. Lower the setting to 49 degrees Celsius or 120 degrees Fahrenheit or “low.” If you are unfamiliar with the settings, ask a qualified person to adjust it for you; if your hot water system is controlled by the landlord, ask the landlord to consider lowering the temperature.
- ❑ **Work areas, especially those where power tools are used, are well lit and clean.**
Basements, garages, and storage areas can contain many tripping hazards. Sharp or pointed tools can make a fall even more hazardous. Make sure to keep your floors and benches clean to reduce fire and tripping hazards.



- ❑ **For electrical panel with fuses, the fuses are the correct size (amperage) for the circuit.**
If you are having electrical problems such as flickering lights, receptacles that do not work or feel hot to the touch, or receiving shocks when you plug in an appliance, you may want to consider upgrading your electrical panel to prevent a fire from occurring.
- ❑ **All power tools are either equipped with a three prong plug or marked to show that they are double-insulated. All space heaters with 3 prong plugs are plugged into 3 hole receptacles or are connected with a properly attached and certified adapter.**
Three prong plugs and double insulation reduce the risk of an electrical shock. Consider replacing old tools that lack a 3 prong plug and are not double-insulated. Improperly grounded tools and appliances can lead to electrical shock. Never defeat the grounding feature by removing the round grounding prong on the plug. Check with an expert electrician if you are in doubt.
- ❑ **Electrical receptacles in garages, unfinished basements, and workshops are protected by ground fault circuit interrupters, or GFCIs.**
Test all GFCIs monthly to make sure they are working properly.
- ❑ **All fuel-burning appliances, including furnaces, boilers, fireplaces, wood stoves, and water heaters, as well as chimneys, flues, and vents have been inspected professionally within the last year.**
A heater operating without proper ventilation and air supply produces carbon monoxide (CO), and older consumers may be more susceptible to CO exposure. CO is an invisible killer. It’s a colorless, odorless. The first line of defense against CO poisoning is to have a qualified professional inspect all fuel burning heating systems, including furnaces, boilers, fireplaces, wood stoves, water heaters, chimneys, flues and vents.

- **All kerosene, and similar space-heating equipment has adequate ventilation.**
Always use the correct fuel, as recommended by the manufacturer. Never pour gasoline into a kerosene heater. Review the installation and operation instructions. Call the manufacturer or your local fire department if you have additional questions.

- **No containers of flammable and combustible liquids are stored inside the house.**
The vapors that can escape from damaged or loosely closed containers of flammable or combustible liquids may be toxic when inhaled and may cause fires. Do not store gasoline or highly flammable liquids inside the house, utility room, garage or near the water heater. Portable gasoline containers intended for use by consumers are required to have child resistant closures.



- **Portable generators are not operating in the basement, garage or anywhere near the house.**
People have been killed by operating a portable generator in their basement or garage. Generators quickly produce high levels of poisonous CO and should never be used indoors, including inside a home, basement, shed, or garage, even if the doors and windows are open. CO from a generator used indoors can kill you and your family in minutes. Consumers should use portable generators outside only and far from windows, doors, and vents to their homes.
For more information on the installation of a transfer switch for your portable generator or the installation of an Automatic Standby Power Generator, contact Thomas Edison Electric for your FREE In Home Evaluation.



TIP



Automatic Standby Power Generators are the safest means of ensuring your mediations that needs refrigeration are kept safe. The Standby Power Generator comes on automatically when power goes out and shuts off automatically when power comes back on.

Check Entryways and the Home Exterior



Make sure there is good lighting inside and outside your home to help prevent falls



- The porch, entryway, and approach to the entryway are all well illuminated.
- The light switch is located near the entryway.
- Outside steps, entryways, and approaches to the entryway are in good condition and are slip resistant.
- Outside steps have handrails that are easily graspable.
- All outside electrical outlets are GFCI protected and in weatherproof covers or enclosures.
- All outdoor electrical tools and equipment have 3 prong cords and have not been modified to plug into 2 prongs outlets.



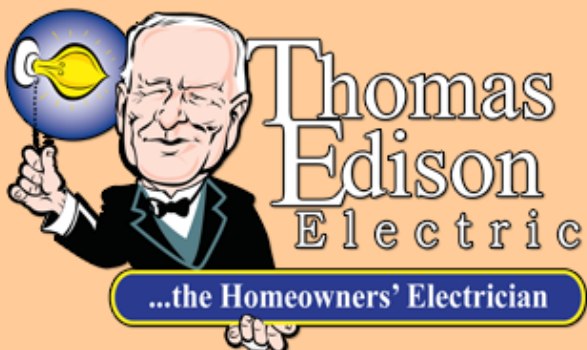
REMEMEBER TO RE-CHECK YOUR HOME PERIODICALLY

FOR ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS ON ANY ELECTRICAL, HEATING, SECURITY OR POWER YOU MAY NEED AFTER GOING OVER THIS SAFETY FOR OLDER CONSUMERS HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST. CONTACT THOMAS EDISON ELECTRIC AT:

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