

# Safety in the Home

**I**N THE YEAR 1954, of the 8,372 Canadians who died from accidental causes, 2,128 or over 25% died as a result of accidents in the home. This startling fact was brought to the Ontario Safety Conference by Miss Grace Hamilton in a panel discussion on "Safety In the Farm Home." The members of the panel, Mrs. Elton Armstrong, a farmer's wife and extension worker well known to Institute members over the province, Mrs. McCandless, F.W.I.O. Public Relations Officer, and Miss Hamilton, a registered nurse of Home Economics Extension Service, left no doubt that we all need to be alerted to the common causes of accidents in homes and what can be done to prevent them.

Mrs. Armstrong also made the point that the onus is not entirely on the homemaker, but that the man of the house has his responsibilities too. Many farms where there are small children have improperly covered wells or open drinking troughs for livestock. And there is the still-too-common practice of taking children for a ride on the tractor. Farmers, and their families, too, run the risk of falls where ladders with broken rungs or dry rungs are used. Miss Hamilton spoke of the rakes, forks and nails left lying on the ground — a fall on one of these could mean a nasty wound with the possibility of tetanus infection. Mrs. McCandless suggested that we might learn a lot about safety in the home from the precautions taken by industry and that such education might be undertaken by our local organizations.

The panel members went right through the house pointing out the all-too-common hazards in the different rooms. In the hall there may be the risk of falls from tripping over toys, skates or other things left lying around, or of stepping on a scatter rug that slips on the polished floor. Polished stair steps cause many falls, or stairs partially blocked by articles to be taken up or down. Small children often tumble down stairs because no one has placed a gate or a chair across the top or the bottom. Stairs should have a strong hand rail, should be well lighted, and in basement stairs the bottom step should be marked with a painted white strip.

In the living-room children often have accidents with things left lying around such as a work-basket with its scissors, needles, thimbles, buttons or a dish of peanuts on a coffee-table. A very small child puts anything he finds in his mouth and the results here may be serious. A child likes to investigate electric cords and outlets, so unused sockets should be taped. Tippy lamps and open fireplaces have their dangers, too.

The panel members considered the kitchen to be the most dangerous room in the house. Common accidents here are cuts from knives, burns from upset pots—the handles of cooking utensils should be "turned in" so that a child cannot reach them; falls from spilled water or grease; falls from climbing on chairs and boxes to reach high places instead of using a strong stepladder; poisonings, in the case of children, from cleaning materials. Fires

may be started from grease spilled on the stove or curtains blowing over a gas flame, or children playing with matches, or someone doing "dry cleaning" in the house. When a mother is busy in the kitchen the safest place for a toddling child is in a playpen. Fire extinguishers should be kept close to the kitchen but tetrachloride should not be used either in a fire extinguisher or as a cleaner, in a closed room — the fumes could cause serious injury or death in a very short time.

The bathroom's most common danger is an unlocked medicine cabinet in a home where there are children, or where old, unlabelled medicines are kept. Falls in the bathtub can usually be prevented by having a rubber mat in the tub. Electric appliances should be kept at a distance from the tub — most people know the danger of touching a switch while in contact with water but not a few take risks. Where there are children some arrangement should be made to prevent them turning on taps and possibly getting beyond their depth in the bathtub.

Two rules were emphasized for safety in bedrooms: If there are small children in the house, keep the lower half of the window screened with the screen fastened securely and at a point too high for the children to reach so that there will be no danger of their falling out when the window is open. **And no smoking in bed.**

A survey of the basement brought the furnace under scrutiny — the need of the cleaning of pipes every spring, the checking of chimneys. It was suggested that here, perhaps more than in any other part of the house, safety depends on the good housekeeping that keeps rubbish and litter cleared away so that there is nothing for a stray spark or a dropped match to ignite. We were warned about the danger of putting hot ashes in a cardboard carton.

If the laundry is in the basement — or wherever the washing machine is kept — precautions must be taken to keep children away from it; especially they must be kept away from the wringer. Miss Hamilton quoted from a hospital survey made in the Ottawa-Hull area which showed that of all the recorded accidents from laundry equipment, most of the accidents were with wringers and 56% of these were to children under five years of age.

## How can organizations help?

In a panel discussion on how organizations can help in a safety programme, Mrs. James Haggerty, President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario said that she felt the Women's Institutes could help a great deal with the survey by educating people to be ready for it, letting them know that the information gathered would be used only to prevent accidents. The branches had been urged to give their co-operation. Institutes also have many opportunities for safety education, as for example through their new extension project "Safety Begins At Home" with local leaders taking the