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This article is provided by the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

The kitchen is the most frequently used room in the house. Apart from the obvious danger from burns and scalds, there are other dangers from falls, cuts and poisoning.

A well-planned and convenient kitchen layout can make all the difference in avoiding potential hazards. It is essential that your activities be carried on undistracted by traffic. The activity area should be well clear of circulation routes and also other activities, such as dining. At the same time, you should be able to watch children playing both inside and out of the kitchen.

As much as possible, there should be continuous working spaces between the stove, sink and refrigerator. Small, unconnected work tops involve additional lifting and carrying of hot saucepans and dishes which increase risk of spillage, burns or scalds.

The stove should be located so that the swing of any door will not interfere with a saucepan handle projecting from the stove, or with a person standing in front of it. It should be at least 6 metres from any window to avoid setting fire to the curtains or blowing out a gas flame.

Work spaces, preferably with a heat-proof surface on either side of the stove, are best. This permits hot saucepans to be set down and provides space for handles to project over the side of the stove instead of the front, where a child may reach up and pull a saucepan of boiling liquid over itself.

A stove in a corner or in front of a counter, where you have to reach over it to the work top beyond, is particularly dangerous.

Many accidents occur when a person must climb onto a chair or other surface to reach high shelves. The maximum height of any shelf should not be more than 6 1/2 metres above the floor, or if over a counter, 5 metres. Cupboard doors should be sliding, or if hinged, should not project beyond the front of the counter to eliminate the danger of bumped heads.

It is preferable to avoid having cupboards placed over a stove. If, however, this can not be avoided, the underside should be protected in case of a fire on the stove.

In many households, the cupboards under the kitchen sink are used to store cleaning agents, polishes, bleaches, drain cleaning fluids, and other substances, all of which may be extremely corrosive and dangerous.

Because the cupboards are within easy reach of children, special precautions must be taken. The door of the cupboard should be provided with a child-proof secondary catch which must be disengaged before the door can be fully opened. These catches, require strength or special coordination of pressing, twisting or pulling which is generally beyond the ability of children under five years old.

An adequate level of lighting is also essential over the sink and stove, so that you are not working in your own shadow. Furthermore, electrical receptacles or switches should not be within reach of a person using the sink.

Safety outlets with a blade opening protected by a shutter and operable only by a grounded plug, will prevent children from pushing small objects into them. Such outlets should be provided in the kitchen, basement, and laundry room.

After the kitchen, the bathroom is potentially the most hazardous place in the home. In a wet, steamy atmosphere, the dangers of slipping, falling or scalding are intensified. Most accidents involving the elderly take place in the bathroom.

Grab-bars capable of withstanding a lot of weight can be installed in baths for elderly people. The bottom of the bathtub or shower should be covered with non-slip adhesive strips to prevent falls. Soap holders placed in both tub and shower for easy access may also prevent accidents.

Many accidents are caused by confusion of hot and cold water controls. These should be clearly marked or colour-coded. Thermostatic valves, while expensive, reduce the danger of scalding.

The washbasin should be set in a vanity or supported by legs so that a child climbing or seated can not pull it from the wall.

Poisoning is a great hazard in the bathroom as in the kitchen. A child-proof catch fitted to the medicine cabinet, vanity or drawers will prevent a child from getting into pills or poisonous substances.

While provincial costs permit switches or receptacles inside the bathroom, they should be out of reach of a person in the bath. An isolating transformer will prevent the danger of electrocution if an electric shaver is dropped into water.

Many elderly people need some form of additional heating, such as infra-red radiant heat lamps. They should be mounted on or near a ceiling, with a ceiling switch operated by a pull cord or a time switch outside the bathroom.



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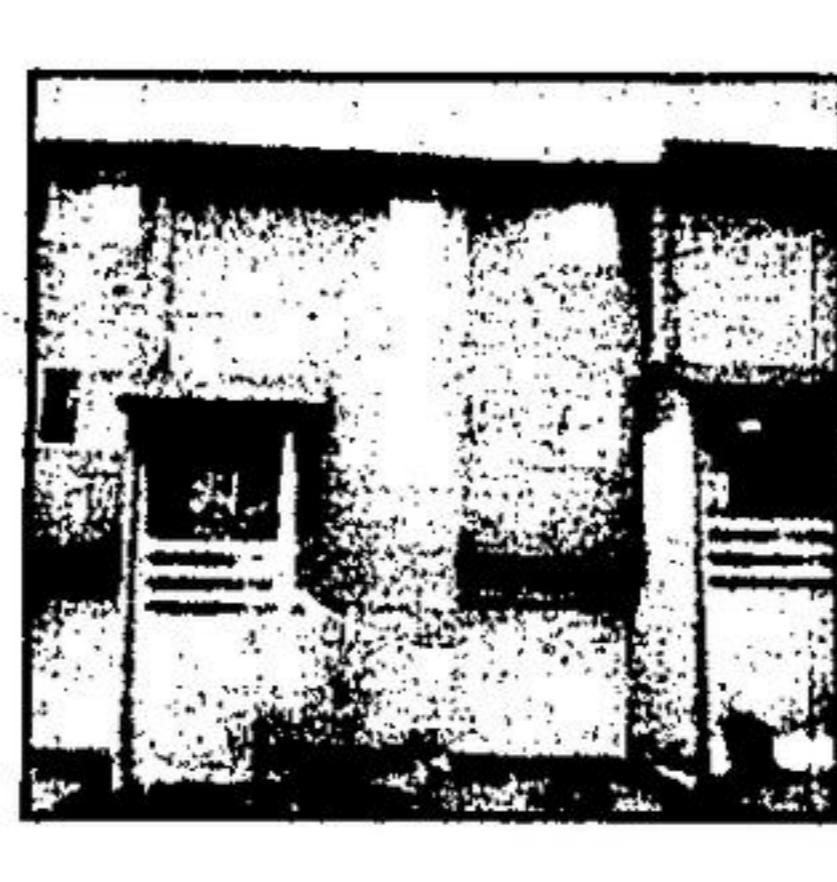
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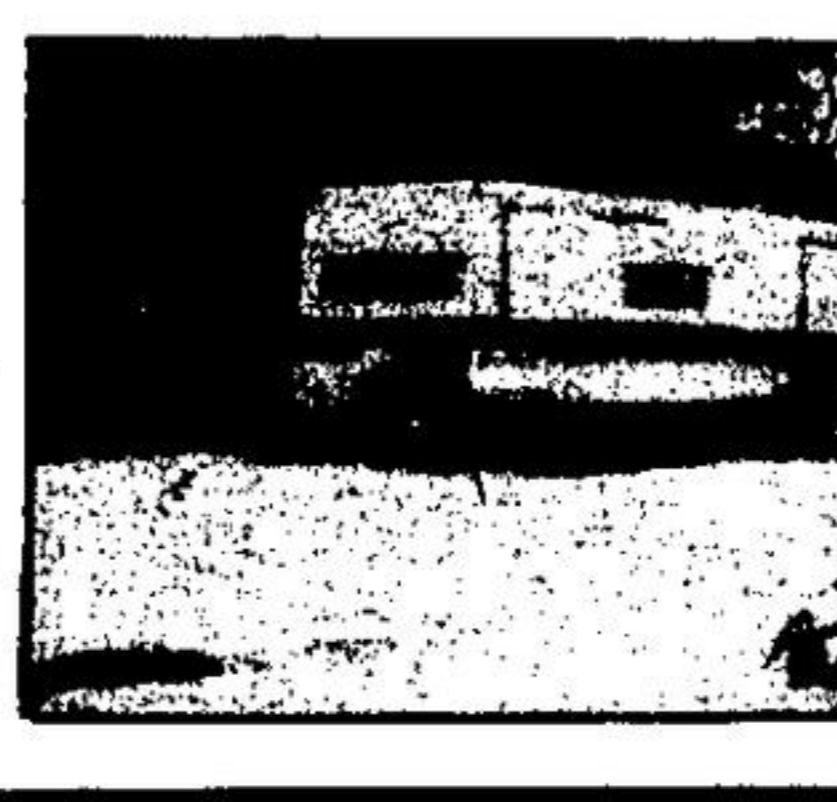
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