

# Fired Up for Payson

## Fired Up for Payson

By, Vince Palandri, Fire Fighter, Payson Fire Department

### When Slips and Falls Get Serious

Among people 65 years and older, falls are the leading cause of injury and the most common cause of hospital admissions for trauma. For males 80 and older and for females 75 and older it is the No. 1 cause of injury-related deaths. Each year in the United States, nearly one third of older adults experience a fall. One-fourth of those who sustain a hip fracture die within one year and another 50 percent never return to their prior level of mobility or independence.

In 2003, more than 13,700 people 65 years or older died of fall-related injuries. Another 1.8 million were treated in emergency departments for nonfatal injuries related to falls.

Sobering statistics to be sure but falls can be prevented. With a conscious effort and the following safety tips, each of us can help make our home free from falls and safe from slips.

#### Start at the front—door, that is

- The best place to start fall proofing your home is at the front door. Vary the colors and textures on the floor at door entrances to help accentuate height differences and level changes and avoid tripping possibilities.
- Create color contrasts between walls and floors; lighter-colored floor surfaces are preferable.
- Minimize changes in walking surfaces, and use slip-resistant coverings such as rough tile and carpet with short, dense pile.
- Increase lighting and reduce the contrasts in lighted areas.

#### Stairways

- Install handrails on both sides of the stairs and extend them one foot beyond the last step at both top and bottom.
- With wooden or concrete steps, mark the nose of each tread with a contrasting color; use paint not tape as a marking agent.
- Remove thick (3/8 inch or thicker) carpets and padding on treads.
- Don't let clutter accumulate on stairways or walking paths.

#### Bathrooms

- Securely install grab-bars in tub/shower units and near toilets at the height and angle best suited for your own need; tubs/showers typically require two bars positioned for support when entering and exiting.
- Use bathroom rugs with nonskid backing.
- Always keep a night-light on in your bathroom.
- Vary the colors in your bathroom. Having a white tub, white toilet and white walls is a big safety hazard. If everything is one color, add bright decals so edges are easily identified.

### **Make a living room livable**

Remember these points when fall-proofing your living and family rooms:

- Glass tables are especially dangerous. You may receive further injuries if you fall onto one and the glass shatters. Your best bet: sturdy wooden tables with rounded corners.
- Arrange furniture to provide open pathways.
- Keep electrical and telephone cords out of walkways, don't hide them under carpeting as that may create a fire hazard down the road.
- Remove hazards. Harmless-looking items like a child's crayon or a magazine on the floor can easily cause a fall.
- Avoid climbing and reaching to high cabinets or shelves, or use a sturdy step stool with handrails.

### **Kids can cause a tumble**

What do pets, kids and leaves have in common? They all have the potential to cause a frightening fall. When leaves get wet, they become very slippery. Kids and pets alike can frequently trip up a person. Visiting children may leave toys scattered increasing the chance of an adult's fall. When grandchildren visit, be sure they pitch in and put toys away.

### **Take a step in the right direction**

Most falls occur from tripping over misplaced items, falling on slippery floors, or factors related to osteoporosis. And like it or not, as we age, changes in our vision, hearing, muscle coordination and reflexes make us more likely to fall. Take a few moments today and put to use the ideas listed above in yours, a friend, or a family members home today.

Until next time be “ *Fired Up*” about preventing trips and falls in your environment.

