

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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Emergency Preparedness and Recovery. Why plan?

Written by Jackie Ogden, FACS Extension Agent, Chatham County



Over the past several years Georgians have experienced up-front and personal the importance of emergency preparedness in communities impacted by hurricanes, floods, winter ice storms and tornadoes. Consumers going through these weather disasters understand through real life encounters during and after the storms the valuable lifesaving benefits of emergency planning. During an emergency situation, agencies may have limited ability and staff to respond to requests for assistance; therefore, it is paramount that individuals plan ahead. Knowing how to respond and being prepared in advance of a weather disaster can aid in a faster recovery. Emergency planning experts recommend having a written plan and planning to be on your own for a minimum of three days. You should review your plan annually and practice procedures and drills.



Image source: Pixabay

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Natural disasters often bring with them storm surges, flooding, well water contamination, debris, wide spread power and water outages, and communication and transportation disruptions. Flooding causes issues with contaminated wells and mold in homes and businesses. Electrical and water outages make sanitation, safe food storage, and food preparation challenging. Since we are not able to stop weather disasters from occurring, you can limit their impact on you and your family by developing a plan and an emergency kit. Contrary to what you may think, the chances of being killed or injured in a disaster are very low. More likely you will be unable to live normally in your home or work in your business. Buildings may be damaged and there may be no power or water. Advance planning and preparation will help you to be more comfortable in the event your home or business is damaged.

The most important step is to develop a communication plan. In emergency situations, communicate with your local Emergency Management Agency and national weather service for updates. Emergencies don't just occur in September, so take time to create an emergency plan for yourself and your family. Learn more about preparing for and dealing with emergencies on the UGA Extension website (www.gafamilies.org/disasters).



Do I really need to check that? Tips for Weatherizing Your Home for Winter

Written by Kathryn Holland, FACS Extension Agent, Colquitt County

Hurricane and tornado season are upon us and winter will be here before we know it. A good practice is to check your home and make sure it will be a warm and healthy environment this winter. This means it is time to weatherize your home for the colder months. You should check the exterior and interior of the house for needed repairs. Here are some things to check as you prepare your home for the cold weather.

- Repair leaky faucets. Stopping water leaks can reduce water use by approximately 13%.
- If you have exterior lights and motion sensors, check to ensure that they function properly.
- Install door sweeps or draft stoppers on exterior doors and windows if needed.
- Have a professional inspect your furnace.
- Change air filters at least every three months, and more often if you have pets.
- Inspect your septic system and pump if needed.
- Check weather-stripping on windows and doors. You can use an incense stick to check for leaks around doors and windows on a windy day. If the smoke moves horizontally then you have a leak. Use caulk to seal leaks. Learn more about [using caulking](#).
- Insert foam insulating gaskets behind outlet covers to prevent heat loss.
- Inspect the roof and repair loose connections and replace missing shingles.
- Clean gutters and downspouts. Ensure that the water discharges 2-3 feet away from the house.
- Cover window mounted air conditioners if you cannot remove them. These covers are reusable and inexpensive.
- If you don't have storm windows, you can insulate windows with clear window film that is available at local hardware stores.
- Check the insulation in the attic and add more if needed. Seal the attic access with an insulated airtight cover.
- Insulate your water heater and pipes to reduce heat loss and lower your energy bill.
- If you have a fireplace or wood stove have the chimney inspected. Close the damper if you are not using the fireplace to prevent drafts.
- As the months get colder, turn off the water supply to exterior water faucets if possible, otherwise disconnect and drain hoses. Cover faucets.

A dripping faucet can waste 5 gallons of water each day. That's money out of your pocket.



Image source: Pixabay

Conducting a Fall Inspection will save your money, and keep you and your family warm and safe during the cold weather. For a home inspection guide, use the [UGA Extension Home Maintenance Checklist](#).

Click to learn how to make a [no-sew draft stopper](#) from a pool noodle.



Image source: Pixabay

Spring		Fall		Basement / Crawl Space	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for signs of mold, moisture, water damage, and leaks. Repair as needed.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Look for signs of rats, bats, roaches, termites, squirrels, mice, and other pests. Seal openings to keep pests out. Treat as needed; you may want to hire a professional.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check that the sump pump and floor drain are working properly.	
Spring		Fall		Exterior	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspect all wood framing for signs of rats, bats, roaches, termites, squirrels, mice, and other pests. Contact a professional as needed to treat.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check exterior siding and trim for loose pieces and chipped or peeling paint. Repair and repaint as needed.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for and replace decaying or damaged trim around the windows and doors.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspect foundation and masonry for cracks. Hire a professional to repair as needed.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for signs of leaks.	
Spring		Fall		Yard	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clear dead plants/shrubs from the house and trim branches of trees that overhang the roof.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspect fence and deck for problems that may lead to wood rot. Clean, repair, reseat, and repaint as needed.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check all garden hoses for leaks and repair as needed.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drain all outdoor faucets and hoses. Store the hoses for winter.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hire a professional to clean out the main sewer line, especially if mature trees are present in your yard. (annually)	

Healthy Home Hint: A Mold Problem is a Moisture Problem

Written by Becca Stackhouse, FACS Extension Agent, Crisp County

Mold and mildew are a nuisance as well as a health concern. For surface type molds you must first fix the moisture problem.

- * Remove the mold using a cloth dampened with a mixture of water and a non-phosphate detergent.
- * Be sure to dry the area to prevent reoccurrence.
- * Take safety precautions if you are cleaning a large area of mold or have respiratory health concerns. Learn more from the UGA publication—[Removing Mold in Your Home](#).



Image source: Shutterstock

Want to prevent that mold from growing in the first place? Three things you can do to eliminate the sources of moisture are:

1. Repair leaking faucets and pipes
2. Clean out clogged gutters
3. Improve the water drainage around your home. For more tips on preventing mold and moisture problems, refer to the UGA Extension publication—[Preventing Mold in Your Home](#).



Invest in hygrometer, which is an instrument to measure humidity, or water content, of the air inside your home. Keeping your indoor humidity below 60% helps, but ideally you want the humidity between 30% - 50%. A dehumidifier can help lower humidity, reduce musty smells and help eliminate mold and mildew. Learn more about mold on the [UGA website](#).

Image source: Pixabay

Healthy Home Hacks

Wash clothes in cold water and save money and energy. The Department of Energy estimates that 90% of the cost of laundry comes from heating the water. Many laundry detergents are formulated to work well at all temperatures. ~ Pamela Turner

Removing odors from the garbage disposal: Place the stopper in the sink. Add approximately three inches of warm water, then add a handful of baking soda. Turn on the disposal and remove the stopper immediately. The disposal will create suction and pull the baking soda mixture down the disposal. ~ Keishon Thomas

Cat litter with activated charcoal is an effective way to remove odors like burnt popcorn from the microwave. Place a bowl of cat litter with activated charcoal in the microwave and leave for several hours. ~ Pamela Turner

Copper mesh around plumbing fixtures helps keep mice out of your home. ~ Pamela Turner



Keeping Your Children Lead Free

Written by Hannah Colwell, FACS Extension, Athens, GA

Unknown to most parents and child care providers, lead is a real danger. It could be in your pipes, soil, or in the paint on your walls. Lead is a naturally occurring element that is most likely present in your daily environment in air, soil, and water. The levels we are exposed to daily are negligible, causing no noticeable health effects. However, if lead is in your home or child care facility, exposure to people in these areas is more common. Think about it, if a child comes to your child care site five days a week for 6 hours a day, that's a potential for 30 hours of close exposure each week. Young children, especially those under the age of 6, are developing at a rapid rate, making them more susceptible to the negative health effects of lead.

Exposure to lead has toxic effects on the liver, kidneys, reproductive system, nervous system, and the brain. Lead's effects are subtle, allowing it to accumulate and cause permanent damage in the body before it is detected. Some of the most common symptoms to overexposure to lead in children are neurological damage, anemia, hearing loss, impaired growth, kidney damage, and insomnia. If you suspect that a child at your facility or home is showing symptoms of lead poisoning, call poison control immediately. In most cases, just reducing exposure to lead will reduce its effects over time. There are treatment options for more severe cases, including chelation therapy.

So, should you have your facility inspected? Yes, especially if the building was built prior to 1978, there is chipping or peeling paint, or if it is located downhill from a structure built before 1978. You can learn more about lead prevention by taking the new Healthy Homes module, Keep Me Lead-Free. This one hour online training is designed for child care professionals and provides an in-depth look at the dangers of lead poisoning, how to identify potential sources of lead, and action steps to take to reduce lead exposure.



This is one of a series of modules created through funding from the National Healthy Homes Partnership. These modules focus on creating healthy child care environments.

They engage the viewer by incorporating educational videos and interactive games. These **FREE** training modules provide child care providers with information and solutions to health concerns in the indoor environment. More @ <http://bit.ly/healthyEnvironmentsforChildCare>.



MODULE 2: The Injury Prevention module was created with the intent to educate and train child care providers to understand the importance of maintaining a safe environment and preventing injuries in the child care facility. The module covers indoor safety, poisons, playground safety and first aid.



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www.georgiahealthyhousing.org

