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Building Safety: Where You Live, Work and Play

Indiana State Building Commissioner Provides Home Safety Tips

The Indiana State Building Commissioner, who oversees the Indiana Department of Homeland Security's (IDHS) Fire and Building Safety Division, is taking the opportunity with Building Safety Week May 5-11 to remind homeowners of safety and energy tips.

Building Safety Week is recognized annually to raise public awareness of building safety, and to promote the use, enforcement and understanding of the importance of building safety and fire prevention codes. "Building Safety: Where you Live, Work and Play" is this year's theme which reflects the importance of getting everyone involved in the prevention of safety and security hazards.

"The important work we do is often overlooked until a catastrophic tragedy occurs," said Don Bradley, Indiana State Building Commissioner. "When building safety and fire prevention experts inspect buildings during and after construction, we help to ensure that the places where you live, learn, work and play are safe."

Building safety and fire prevention codes address all aspects of construction, such as structural soundness of buildings, reliability of fire prevention and suppression systems, plumbing and mechanical systems, and energy efficiency and sustainability. To ensure buildings are safe requires the active participation of building safety and fire prevention officials, architects, builders, engineers, and others in the construction industry, as well as property owners.

Hoosiers can participate in this year's Building Safety Week by following some simple home safety tips.

- Ensure smoke detectors are working properly. Building safety codes require smoke detectors outside of each bedroom and on each story of a home, including basements, to warn occupants of smoke and fire. Test your smoke detectors monthly and replace the batteries at least twice each year. A good time to replace the batteries is when the clocks are turned back each year.
- Check your roof for shingles that are buckling or curling and look for open seams and missing fasteners, especially around vents and chimneys. All can be signs that your roof is wearing out. Also check walls and ceilings for signs of water damage. Even small leaks can cause thousands of dollars in damage. Clogged gutters can also cause damage to your home.

Clean them by removing debris by hand, then flushing the gutters and downspouts with a garden hose.

- Energy loss through windows is another budget buster if leaks and loose fasteners aren't repaired or replaced. Building safety codes require that windows be well-maintained and weather tight to prevent leaks and improve energy efficiency. Insects like to take advantage of openings too, which is why codes require the use of window and door screens to reduce insect infestations.
- To prevent energy loss and higher heating and cooling bills, schedule regular inspections of furnace and air conditioning systems. Building safety codes require that these appliances be properly installed and maintained to ensure they are safe, functional and efficient. Exhaust ducts should also be checked for blockages that could cause poor operation or safety hazards.
- Water loss through leaking toilets, sinks and other plumbing fixtures can increase your water bill by more than 30 percent. Replace leaking faucet valves and toilet parts to save money and conserve an increasingly precious natural resource.

“Public safety is our number one concern,” said Bradley. “During Building Safety Week and all year long, building safety and fire prevention officials are here to help protect Hoosiers.”

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