



Elder News

Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs (GOEA)

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Message from the Executive Director

Falls Prevention - Improvements for Independence

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If you are fortunate enough to still have close family members in the 60+ club, you may be wondering what to get them for Christmas this year. Think about changes in their living space to prevent falls. Statistics show older adults prefer to stay at home for as long as possible, but too often don't think about whether a home can adapt to their needs as they age. A sense of safety and comfort at home is a large part of living well. Home modifications and repairs can help older adults and people with disabilities, prevent falls and maintain an independent lifestyle. Many falls do not cause injuries. But, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), one out of five falls does cause a serious injury such as a broken bone or a head injury. The CDC further states that these injuries can make it hard for a person to get around, do everyday activities, or live on their own. Making improvements before they are needed is a good way to ensure that a home is ready for aging in place. Forward-thinking improvements can also prevent falls, which often cause the need for long-term care. Changes can be made to improve both the accessibility and adaptability of a home. Accessibility improvements involve tasks like widening doorways and lowering countertop heights for someone who uses a wheelchair. Adaptability changes, such as adding grab bars in bathrooms, are improvements made to assist persons for whom strength and balance may have become a challenge. These changes usually can be done without a major redesign or full-blown renovation. Start by conducting a top-to-bottom assessment of your family member's home.

What can happen after a fall?

- Falls can cause broken bones, like wrist, arm, ankle, and hip fractures.
- Falls can cause head injuries. These can be very serious, especially if the person is taking certain medicines (like blood thinners). An older person who falls and hits their head should see their doctor right away to make sure they don't have a brain injury.
- Many people who fall, even if they're not injured, become afraid of falling. This fear may cause a person to cut down on their everyday activities. When a person is less active, they become weaker and this increases their chances of falling.

Executive Director's Message Continued...

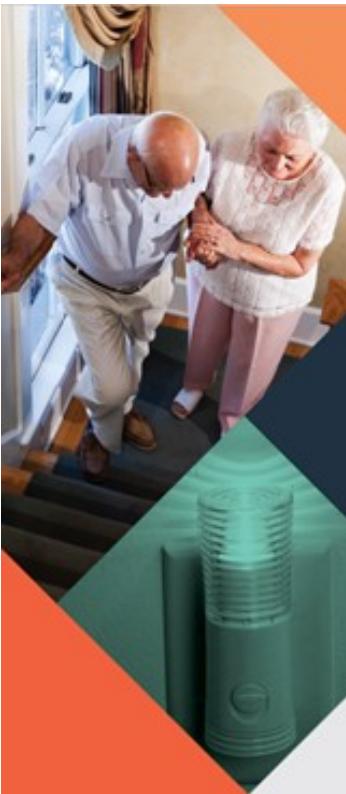
Do a home assessment. Before making any changes, take a look at the entire home. Keep in mind items that may be needed in the future as well as now. The assessment below was prepared by the CDC. This checklist can help identify areas that might need improvement. Everyone has different needs, but in general, a “no” answer may be cause for action.

- Are exterior walkways and entrances well-lit?
- Is there a step-free entrance to the home?
- Are entrance doors easy to lock, unlock, open, and close?
- Does the main floor include a kitchen, bedroom, and full bathroom?
- Are doorways wide enough for someone using a wheelchair, walker, or service animal?
- Is wall-to-wall carpeting secure and in good condition (flat, not bunched up)?
- Are area rugs secured to the floor with non-slip padding?
- Are walkways free from obstructions and hazards like cords and furniture?
- Do stairways have sturdy handrails on both sides?
- Can bathroom and kitchen cabinets be easily reached?
- Is there a step-free shower entrance?
- Are grab bars available near the shower and toilet?
- Do bathtubs and showers have non-slip mats, adhesive strips, or slip-free floors?
- Will smoke detectors provide visual as well as audio alerts?
- Are telephones easily accessible on all floors?

As you can see, not all the necessary changes to help the older family member remain in their own home for as long as possible are expensive to make. I have included the “Check for Safety – A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults prepared by the CDC for guiding you through this process at the end of this message.

I highly recommend that you check with your local Area Agency on Aging or Council on Aging for evidence-based programs, i.e., Matter of Balance, Tai Chi, that have proven to help older adults learn how to fall and help with balancing. Contact information is on the GOEA website - <https://goea.louisiana.gov/agency-directory/>. This also is a link to the National Falls Prevention Resource Center for additional information on fall prevention. <https://www.ncoa.org/professionals/health/center-for-healthy-aging/national-falls-prevention-resource-center>. Happy Holidays!





Check for Safety

A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults



Contact your local community or senior center for information on exercise, fall prevention programs, or options for improving home safety.

For additional information on fall prevention, visit go.usa.gov/xN9XA



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

STEADI

Stopping Elderly Accidents,
Deaths & Injuries

Use this checklist to find and fix hazards in your home.

STAIRS & STEPS (INDOORS & OUTDOORS)

Are there papers, shoes, books, or other objects on the stairs?

- Always keep objects off the stairs.

Are some steps broken or uneven?

- Fix loose or uneven steps.

Is there a light and light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs?

- Have an electrician put in an overhead light and light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs. You can get light switches that glow.

Has a stairway light bulb burned out?

- Have a friend or family member change the light bulb.

Is the carpet on the steps loose or torn?

- Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads to the stairs.

Are the handrails loose or broken? Is there a handrail on only one side of the stairs?

- Fix loose handrails, or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs, and are as long as the stairs.

FLOORS

When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture?

- Ask someone to move the furniture so your path is clear.

Do you have throw rugs on the floor?

- Remove the rugs, or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.

Are there papers, shoes, books, or other objects on the floor?

- Pick up things that are on the floor. Always keep objects off the floor.

Do you have to walk over or around wires or cords (like lamp, telephone, or extension cords)?

- Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. If needed, have an electrician put in another outlet.

KITCHEN

Are the things you use often on high shelves?

- Keep things you use often on the lower shelves (about waist high).

Is your step stool sturdy?

- If you must use a step stool, get one with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

BEDROOMS

Is the light near the bed hard to reach?

- Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach.

Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark?

- Put in a nightlight so you can see where you're walking. Some nightlights go on by themselves after dark.

BATHROOMS

Is the tub or shower floor slippery?

- Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.

Do you need some support when you get in and out of the tub, or up from the toilet?

- Have grab bars put in next to and inside the tub, and next to the toilet.



In the Spotlight

Caldwell Council on Aging: Would like to wish two of their seniors a very happy birthday! Pictured below on the left, is Mr. Bob Shearer who just turned 80 years old . He is very active and works out on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the gym with other seniors. Pictured on the right is Mr. Henry Evans who just turned 66 years old. He keeps everyone laughing at the council. Both gentlemen are awesome seniors!



Ascension Council on Aging: Seniors participating in exercise classes offered at the Wellness Center!



Evangeline Council on Aging: Held its Annual Meeting and Senior Day on September 28, 2023. This was the first Senior Day since Covid-19 and it was a great success!



West Baton Rouge Council on Aging: Would like to introduce their 10 week Fitness Program that has been initiated to run from October 26th through December 27th; 30-45 minutes, one day a week. This program is geared towards getting the seniors to participate in physical activity which includes stretching, walking, chair yoga, and more. While the seniors are engaged, we are targeting to improve endurance, flexibility, strength, and balance. They would also like to announce their November and December birthdays!

Happy Birthday!

Sarah Anderson	Marlene Joseph	Sherry Thibodeaux	Elizabeth Griffin	Inez Toussaint
Wayne Breaux	Mary Lanehart	Kathleen Zumo	Ray Helen Lawrence	Doris Vance
Patricia Carter	Orange Lang	Emma Antoine	Laurie Monceaux	Rosetta Nelson
Linda David	Charles Leblanc	Janice Clopton	Shirley Palmer	Jesse Evans
Michael Jarrett	Michael Morris	Jessie Doucet	Joe Simpson	Doris Snearl

Terrebonne Council on Aging: Would like to wish Ms. Dot Rodgers a very happy 97th birthday! They also hosted an October Social! The pictures below are from the event!



Jefferson Davis Council on Aging: Hosted the Annual Fall Fest Gumbo sponsored by Sheriff Ivy Woods, on October 27th. The event was open to all senior citizens of Jefferson Davis Parish!



Lafourche Council on Aging: Would like to wish Mr. Edward Fletcher, Mr. Alvin Monroe, and Mr. Jerry Percle a very Happy Birthday!



Sabine Council on Aging: Held their Annual Thanksgiving Luncheon at the Life Church in Many, LA on November 20th. All four of their meal sites come together to enjoy good food and fellowship.



Ms. Lucille Dewitt just celebrated her 96th birthday on Oct. 5. She still drives and enjoys baking her famous tea cakes.



Seniors from the Many site at the monthly singing with the residents at Many Healthcare.

Congratulations to Ms. Jackie Snider. After 16 years of service at the council on aging, she has retired effective 11-9-23. She was always willing to go above and beyond for the residents of Sabine Parish. She will be greatly missed!



Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs: On September 18-20, 2023 GOEA held the first Statewide Training Conference since the pandemic. The pictures below are from the conference.



Breast Cancer Awareness Walk!



Alzheimer's 2023 Walk to Remember



Winter Weather Preparation

Severe winter weather hasn't hit most places of the U.S. - yet. FEMA recommends preparing now to take the sting out of wintry weather. Here are some things you can do to get ready:

- Store drinking water, first aid kit, canned/no-cook food, non-electric can opener, radio, flashlight and extra batteries where you can get them easily, even in the dark.
- Keep cars and other vehicles fueled and in good repair, with a winter emergency kit in each.
- Get a NOAA Weather Radio to monitor severe weather.
- Know the warning terms for each kind of disaster in your community; including:
 - "winter storm watch" --- Be alert, a storm is likely
 - "winter storm warning" --- Take action, the storm is in or entering the area
 - "blizzard warning" --- Snow and strong winds combined will produce blinding snow, near zero visibility, deep drifts, and life-threatening wind chill--seek refuge immediately!
 - "winter weather advisory" --- Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous, especially to motorists
 - "frost/freeze warning" --- Below freezing temperatures are expected and may cause damage to plants, crops, or fruit trees
- Know ahead of time what you should do to help elderly or disabled friends, neighbors or employees.
- Winterize your house, barn, shed or any other structure that may provide shelter for your family, neighbors, livestock or equipment. Install storm shutters, doors and windows; clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks; and check the structural ability of the roof to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow--or water, if drains on flat roofs do not work.

Also remember that dressing in layers is important when the temperatures drop. Experts recommend wearing several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water-repellent. Mittens are warmer than gloves. Wear a hat. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from extremely cold air. Wear sturdy, waterproof boots in snow or flooding conditions.

And remember that if you lose your power and are using kerosene heaters make sure you maintain ventilation to avoid a build-up of toxic fumes. Keep heaters at least three feet from flammable objects and refuel kerosene heaters outside.



5 Things to Know about Winter Weather Forecasts



1

Snow or ice totals can vary greatly over short distances

A heavy snow band may form, dropping more snow in one location while significantly less snow falls just a few miles away.



3

Focus more on the winter storm's impacts

Don't focus too much on exact numbers, and consider the full range of possibilities.



4

Know your winter weather terminology

If a Watch is issued, get prepared for hazardous weather. If a Warning or Advisory is issued, take action – hazardous weather is occurring or will occur soon.

5

Rely on a dependable source for weather info

Choose your information sources wisely, and follow a name or organization you know and trust.



For more information on winter weather safety, visit:
weather.gov/winter



Join us in welcoming our new team members!

Ethel Luneau ~ Home and Community Based Services

Charmona Henry ~ Elderly Protective Services

Danielle Owens ~ Elderly Protective Services

Karlisa Wells ~ Elderly Protective Services

Seletta Jones ~ Elderly Protective Services



The Louisiana Executive Board on Aging

The next scheduled quarterly LEBA meeting will be held on

February 6, 2024 @ 11am

The Board members are listed below:

Johnny Berthelot

Huey Beverly

Terry Courville

Leslie Keen—Chairwoman

Ann Keene

Gerard Landry

Worlita Jackson



Willie Lewis

Donald Mallet

Heather Prejean

Charles "Buddy" Pugh

Ricco Thomas

Blanche Wilks

Congratulations

Please join us in congratulating Ms. Shirley Merrick on her retirement! Effective January 8, 2024 she will officially be retired. In June 1974, Ms. Merrick started working for Capital Area Agency on Aging, Inc. in the aging network. In 2020, she departed from the organization to take a position as the Executive Director for the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs. She has devoted nearly 50 years of service to our senior population. Thank you for your committed service and dedication! You will be greatly missed!



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