

MOHAWK COUNCIL OF  
KAHNAWÀ:KE



# Homeowner Manual Health, Safety & Emergencies

MOHAWK COUNCIL OF KAHNAWÀ:KE



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For questions regarding the manual's content please contact the Housing Unit at [kahnawake.com/housing/](http://kahnawake.com/housing/) or by calling 450-638-2672.

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## INTRODUCTION

# Purpose of this Manual



### **Welcome to the Health, Safety & Emergencies Manual of the Homeowner Manual Series!**

This guide is designed to help homeowners protect themselves, their families, and their property. This manual seeks to inform the community about common safety risks and community-based resources.

Inside this manual, you will find important information about recognizing signs of risk to health, understanding hazards and learning practical steps to reduce health and safety risks in your home. You will also find guidance on emergency preparedness, insurance considerations, and what to do in urgent situations.

Our goal is to ensure you are well-prepared to make informed decisions, respond effectively to emergencies, and maintain a safe living environment.

# Health Risks



- Signs your health is at risk
  - How to know your house is not habitable
  - Steps for reducing health risks
-

# SIGNS YOUR HEALTH IS AT RISK

## 1. Respiratory Illnesses

If you or a family member suddenly develops a chronic respiratory illness such as asthma, severe allergies (Note: you can develop allergies at any age) or lung disease, this may be caused by low air quality in the home.

The air quality in your home is determined by several factors, including:

- Presence of mold or moisture
- Pet or pests
- Presence of chemicals
- Poor ventilation

Community members experiencing respiratory issues should visit a doctor as quickly as possible to rule out any other causes. If you suspect it may be your home causing the illness, begin searching for potential sources.

Look for damp spots on the walls, ceilings and floors. Also be on the lookout for mold in your basement, kitchen and bathroom as these places encounter a lot of moisture. Humidity detectors are an affordable way to detect areas where mold would thrive and determine if you require extra ventilation in your home. KSCS can also test for mold conditions. Note: if someone says they specialize in mold, that does not mean they are actually certified.

## 2. Cardiovascular Diseases

Poor air quality and cool house temperatures have been linked to increased cardiovascular diseases. If you are experiencing cardiovascular issues, assess whether your home is helping or worsening your condition.

Air quality testers can be bought, or you can contact KSCS through their environmental health services to schedule an appointment to test your air quality. Call (450) 632-6880 to book your appointment.

Ideally your air quality is equal to or less than 2.5  $\mu\text{m}$  in aerodynamic diameter according to the PM2.5 index. If you have poor air quality, ensure that you meet the following:

- Good ventilation (see the Homeowner Home Maintenance Manual for more details on maintaining good ventilation)
- House temperature is reading at 18 degrees Celsius or above

## 3. Infectious Diseases

In addition to respiratory illnesses, there are also many other infectious diseases that can be brought about through unsafe housing conditions. Gastrointestinal diseases are among the most common as are skin infections.

These can be caused by contaminated water and/or insufficient hygiene practices. Especially during flu season, it is important to be washing your hands and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, although it is best to do this year-round. Water can be checked using an at home water testing kit. KSCS also provides water testing. You can call [450-635-9945](tel:450-635-9945) to setup an appointment.

# SIGNS YOUR HEALTH IS AT RISK

## 4. Physical Injuries

Physical injuries are common in both new builds and old homes. If you find yourself avoiding certain sections of your house to avoid injuries or catch yourself sustaining multiple injuries, that part of your home needs to be assessed.

To start, community members should determine if they or family members are more at risk for at-home injuries, such as the elderly, children or people with physical disabilities or impairments. Specific actions will need to be taken to ensure they are safe at home, which may include but is not limited to; installing safety gates, adding ramps, locking cupboards, anchoring large pieces of furniture, etc.

Everyday practices can also help reduce the number of injuries, such as:

- Keeping the floors dry and clutter free
- Use step stools
- Ensure there is adequate lighting
- Keep doorways and stairs clear of items

Installing handrails and keeping them up to code, inside and outside your home is also a great way to avoid injuries

## 5. Mental Health Deterioration

Physical health is not the only consequence of an unhealthy home. Your mental health can also take a toll.

It's possible that the chronic physical illnesses will negatively impact mental health as well as cognitive function. Certain illnesses cause fatigue, brain fog and difficulty concentrating, which can all lead to depression and anxiety.

The stress of knowing your home is unsafe can also be a heavy burden for some people and it may impact your ability to do everyday tasks.

A sign someone's diminishing capacity is the state of their home and hoarding. They may also feel less inclined to have guests over because of the state of their home.



# HOW TO KNOW IF YOUR HOME IS NOT HABITABLE

## Definitions

**Condemnation:** When a unit or property is unsafe to occupy. Condemnation can be a consequence of structural failure, fire, sewage, and/or persistent hazards. It can also happen from a failure to comply with building codes.

### **Who can condemn a property?**

In Kahnawake under the Hazardous Structures Law, **ONLY** the Kahnawake Fire Brigade can perform an inspection and condemn a house. The homeowner also needs to provide consent for the inspection.

## Contacts

Community members receiving housing or funding from the MCK Housing Unit should contact us to inform us of the situation.

The Fire Brigade can also be contacted directly to schedule an appointment.

If you think your house is not safe to live in, be sure to prioritize having it inspected and ensuring your safety.

**Note:** contractors **CANNOT** condemn a house, however their opinion should be taken into consideration when deciding whether to contact the proper authorities.



## STEPS TO REDUCE HEALTH RISKS

### Mold Prevention & Detection

Mold is often called a "silent killer" because people don't suspect it's causing their chronic illnesses and it's hard to find. It can hide in grout, behind washing machines, or even inside walls.

Mold is preventable by keeping humidity between 30-50%, using bathroom and kitchen fans, and repairing leaks promptly.

Deal with mold as soon as you see it as it can have serious health consequences.

### Carbon Monoxide Detector

Carbon Monoxide is deadly and undetectable without a detector. Carbon monoxide detectors are essential in every home.

Follow manufacturer instructions for placement height and distance. Change batteries every 6 months.

**DO NOT remove batteries without replacing them and DO NOT remove detectors from your home.**



**Note: Smoke detectors should be hardwired into your home.**

### Monitor Radon Levels

Radon is a radioactive, odourless, tasteless gas released from the ground. It enters homes through foundation cracks, construction gaps, window casements, and floor drains. Levels above 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> are dangerous and linked to lung cancer in non-smokers.

Test using a DIY kit or hire a professional such as KSCS Environmental Health Services. See Canada.ca for more info on testing and reducing radon levels.

Note: even if neighbours test within acceptable limits, your home may still have radon. Get tested, especially if you have basement bedrooms.

If building or renovating, add radon ventilation systems to your plans. Ask your contractor about solutions.

### Safe Practices

Small everyday habits help prevent health risks and emergencies at home:

- Blow out unattended candles
- Use the hood vent while cooking
- Keep windows, doorways, and stairs clear of obstacles
- Avoid smoking indoors
- Keep the house at a safe temperature

These may seem small, but they add up over time and make a huge difference in keeping you, your family, and your home safe.

# Safety Measure & Precautions



- Insurance
- Important Safety Tools
- Anti-burgling Advisement

# INSURANCE

## Home Insurance

Home insurance is essential if you are a homeowner. This insurance protects you against damage or loss to your home, theft from your home or car, injury to others who visit your home and accidental damage you caused to someone else's property. Before you choose an insurance company, be sure to call around and compare prices. Note: your insurance payments may fluctuate annually.

## Life Insurance Vs. Health Insurance

### **Life Insurance:**

Lump sum paid to your beneficiaries after you pass away.

### **Health Insurance:**

Helps cover medical costs.

Community members should have **BOTH** life and health insurance as they cover different things and are often complementary.

## Mortgage Insurance

Mortgage insurance protects the lender in the case that the borrower fails to make mortgage payments. This allows lenders to offer mortgages to borrowers who otherwise would not qualify for a mortgage at a more competitive interest rate and with lower upfront costs.

Note: the borrower is not responsible for supplying the mortgage insurance.

## Other Types of Insurances

Other community members may need to invest in other types of insurance including car insurance, disability insurance, pet insurance, etc.

Note: if you have a business run from your home, you may need additional insurance separate from your home insurance for your business. Call your insurance provider for more information regarding home businesses.

Should you choose to rent your home out, it is advisable that you require your tenant(s) to invest in renter insurance.



# IMPORTANT SAFETY TOOLS

## 1. Fire Extinguishers

In addition to smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, every home should have a fire extinguisher. These items should be placed in easily accessible areas, preferably in locations where a fire could occur such as the kitchen.

See the 'Homeowners Maintenance Manual' to know when to service your fire extinguishers and where to do it.

## 2. First Aid Kit

Every home should have a first aid kit comprised of basic medical supplies to deal with minor injuries. These kits should be easily accessible to all members of the household and should include items such as:

Bandages

Gauze pads

Medical tape

Scissors

Tweezers

Disposable latex gloves

Alcohol wipes

Cold/hot packs

Saline

Elastic bandages

Feel free to include other supplies you think your family may need such as children's Tylenol.

**First Aid Manual  
from the Red Cross**



## 3. First Aid Manual

To accompany the first aid kit, ensure you have a manual that provides instructions on how to treat common injuries and how to use the supplies appropriately.

This manual should also include emergency contact information such as:

- Poison control
- Family doctor information
- Numbers of emergency contacts

If you have young children, make sure they are familiar with these numbers and know the appropriate time to call them.

These numbers can also be printed and hung in common spaces around the house like the fridge or on a bulletin board for easy access.

## 4. Escape Routes

Home should have at least two points of exit that can be used in the event of an emergency that requires evacuation. Identify those points in your home and ensure each resident is familiar with the exits.

Ideally, families should practice their evacuation plans to limit risks during an emergency.

## IMPORTANT SAFETY TOOLS

### 5. Over-the-counter Medications

Over-the-counter medications can be used in common emergency situations such as headaches, minor aches and pains, sore throat, allergic reactions, etc.

Some common medications to have in your home include:

- Pain relievers (Tylenol, Advil, etc)
- Antihistamines
- Anti-diarrheal medication
- Calamine lotion

Also include any other medications your family may need such as aspirin for potential cardiac events or glucose tablets for diabetic emergencies.

Be sure to check the medication every few months to ensure nothing has expired. If you come across expired medication, be sure to bring it to your nearest pharmacy for the pharmacist to dispose of them properly. **ALL** medications should be kept out of the reach of children or in a locked cabinet.

### 6. Battery Operated Flashlights

The weather in Quebec can be unpredictable and it is important to have a reliable source of light should you lose power for an extended period of time.

Each home should have a couple of flashlights varying in size and intensity as well as the appropriate batteries around the house for power outages.

Some households may even prefer to have battery operated lights installed over doorways and in the staircase in addition to portable flashlights.

### 7. Fireproof Safes

The days of storing important documents and cash under your mattress are behind you. Fireproof safes ensure anything of importance such as, passports, birth certificates, extra cash, social insurance card, etc don't get destroyed in the event of a house fire.

These safes can also be used to keep personal documents safe from theft.

**Note:** not all safes are fireproof.

### 8. Miscellaneous

Some households may have specific safety needs for children, elderly, physically impaired or pets. These things may include child safety locks on cabinets, baby gates, non-slip mats, additional locks, more specific emergency plans and medications, indoor/outdoor cameras, door and window sensors, home security system, etc.

Please see the following links on page 21 to read more on these safety precautions:

[AlwaysReadyHQ<sup>1</sup>](#)

[CR90<sup>2</sup>](#)

[Canada.ca<sup>3</sup>](#)

[AccessibilityChecker<sup>4</sup>](#)

[PetsCare<sup>5</sup>](#)

# ANTI-BURGLING ADVISEMENTS

## 1. Motion Activated Lights

In 2025 the Peacekeepers were called 19 times for incidents of breaking and entering and 54 calls were about theft. One way to potentially prevent this, is to install motion activated lights outside your home. Not only will this deter unwanted visitors, it can also improve accessibility.

Adequate lighting on your property in general (not necessarily motion activated) is also important.

## 2. Window Locks

One of the simplest ways to keep your home safe is to lock all your doors and windows, especially if you are not home.

If your windows do not already have locks on them, it is advisable to invest in window locks to prevent easy entry into your home.

## 3. Cameras

More advanced measures include installing cameras in your home and on your property. Cameras can deter stealing and overall enhance security. Should a burglary occur, the cameras may provide useful information for the Peacekeepers to use in their investigation.

Cameras can also help keep at risk members safe in and around your home such as children, elderly and incapacitated individuals.

## 4. Security System

In addition to cameras, homeowners may want to invest in a security system that alerts them and the police that someone has broken into their home. These systems can be a bit pricey, however it provides peace of mind that your home is protected.

If you are interested in this type of security measure, call around to providers and find the right setup for your household.



# Emergencies



- Types of emergencies
    - What to do
    - Who to call
    - Scripts
-

# EMERGENCIES

## 1. House Fires

Household fires can be caused by many things. The most common are kitchen fires involving oil or grease. These are particularly dangerous as they spread quickly and **CANNOT** be put out by water. Use a fire blanket or place a lid over the pot or pan. Other common causes include unattended candles, hair tools left plugged in, and faulty electrical setups (string lights, overloaded extension cords, or devices left on fabric). Candle fires can be extinguished with water or a fire extinguisher. Fires caused by hair tools or electronics are electrical fires and more details can be found in the Electrical Issues section. Outdoor fires can also spread to your home if not properly extinguished. See the outdoor fires section for more information.

Note: New homes cannot install wood stoves, but older homes with existing ones may keep and maintain them.

If a fire occurs on your property, you **MUST** call the Kahnawake Peacekeepers for emergency assistance. Even if you believe a small fire has been extinguished, have it inspected by professionals.

**Call (450) 632-6505 for any fire-related emergencies.**

### What to say

"Hello, I need to report a fire at my home."

"My address is [YOUR ADDRESS]."

"The fire is in the [LOCATION - kitchen, bedroom, garage, etc.]."

"[Describe the situation - e.g. The fire is spreading / I have contained it / There is heavy smoke]."

"There are [NUMBER] people in the home."

"Everyone is [out of the house / someone is still inside]."

### Common questions the operator will ask:

1. What is your exact address?
2. Is anyone injured or trapped inside?
3. How many people are in the household?
4. What started the fire (if known)?
5. What room or area of the home is the fire in?
6. Is the fire spreading?
7. Are there any hazardous materials nearby (propane tanks, chemicals)?
8. Are all exits accessible?
9. Do you have pets that may still be inside?
10. What is your name and callback number?

### Important reminders:

- Stay calm and speak clearly
- Do NOT hang up until the operator tells you to
- Evacuate first, then call from a safe location
- Do not re-enter the building for any reason

# EMERGENCIES

## 2. Outdoor Fires

If you plan on having fires outside on your property, it is essential that you have a proper setup. A safe and proper setup adheres to the following guidelines:

- Safe distance from structures (minimum of 10-15ft)
- Placed on flat ground
- Made of material that can withstand high temperatures (stone or metal)
- Barrier around the fire made of sand or gravel
- Tools to extinguish (shovel, fire extinguisher, bucket of water, etc.)
- Use of the right fuel (**avoid** dead brush and coniferous trees)

When putting out the fire, scatter remaining embers and drench with water. Even without a visible flame, hot embers below the wood can reignite with a gust of wind. Always drench and spread ashes before leaving a fire unattended.

If the fire spreads or gets out of control, you **MUST** call the Kahnawake Peacekeepers for emergency assistance.

**Call (450) 632-6505 for any fire-related emergencies.**

### What to say:

"Hello, I need to report an outdoor fire that is spreading/out of control."

"My address is [YOUR ADDRESS]."

"The fire started in my [backyard / fire pit / near the tree line]."

"[Describe the situation - e.g. It is spreading toward my home / neighbor's property / the brush]."

"There are [NUMBER] people nearby."

### Common questions the operator will ask:

1. What is your exact address?
2. How large is the fire?
3. Is it spreading toward any structures?
4. Is anyone injured?
5. What started the fire?
6. Are there propane tanks or fuel nearby?
7. Is there wind carrying the fire in a direction?
8. Have you attempted to extinguish it?
9. Are neighbors at risk?
10. What is your name and callback number?

### Important reminders:

- Stay calm and speak clearly
- Do NOT hang up until the operator tells you to
- Move away from the fire before calling
- Do not attempt to fight a large fire alone
- Keep children and pets away

## EMERGENCIES

### 3. Electrical Issues

As mentioned above, electrical fires can be common especially in older homes. Typically you can tell if there is an electrical fire if there it smells like burning plastic. If your home is over 30 years old, it is advisable to have a professional assess the condition.

A fire extinguisher can be used to put out these types of fires and the appliance should be unplugged if it is safe to do so.

Emergency services should be called in this situation as well.

**Call (450) 632-6505 for any electrical fires.**

Other electrical emergencies include flickering lights, burning smells, sparks and frequent tripping breakers.

Do **NOT** try to fix these issues on your own if you are NOT a licensed electrician. It could lead to more issues or even electrocution.

Check if all your outlets have face plates and that your kitchen, bathroom and outdoor outlets are GFCI outlets. These outlets prevent electrical shock by interrupting the flow of electricity. They can be identified by their "Test" and "Reset" buttons located in the middle of the outlet. There should **NOT** be any exposed wires in your home and you should **NEVER** try to keep a breaker on by taping it.

#### **What to say:**

"Hello, I need to report an electrical emergency at my home."

"My address is [YOUR ADDRESS]."

"I am experiencing [sparking from an outlet / burning smell from wiring / an electrical fire / power lines down]."

"The issue is located in my [LOCATION - kitchen, basement, breaker panel, etc.]."

"I have [turned off the breaker / unplugged the appliance / not touched anything]."

"There are [NUMBER] people in my household."

#### **Common questions the operator will ask:**

1. What is your exact address?
2. Is there an active fire or smoke?
3. Is anyone injured or experiencing electric shock?
4. Have you turned off the main breaker?
5. Are there any downed power lines near your home?
6. What appliance or area is the issue coming from?
7. Is there water near the electrical issue?
8. How many people are in the home?
9. Are there children or elderly persons present?
10. What is your name and callback number?

#### **Important reminders:**

- Do NOT use light switches, matches or electronics
- Evacuate immediately if the smell is strong
- Do NOT hang up until the operator says to
- Call from outside the home
- Do not re-enter until cleared by professionals

## EMERGENCIES

### 4. Gas Leaks & Poisoning

There are several signs to recognize a gas leak:

Sulfur-like or rotten egg smell

Hissing noises near appliances

Dead or dying plants near the potential gas leak

Adverse health symptoms such as dizziness, headaches, nausea, fatigue and difficulty breathing

Certain appliances can cause gas leaks such as propane stoves, hot water tanks, furnaces and certain fridges.

If you suspect you have a gas leak take the following steps to ensure your safety

Evacuate the area and do **NOT** touch anything

Do **NOT** ignite a match, cigarette, etc

Open ALL doors and windows to air out the house

Turn off the gas supply only if it is safe to do so

**Call (450) 632-6505 for emergency services**

#### **What to say:**

"Hello, I need to report a suspected gas leak at my home."

"My address is [YOUR ADDRESS]."

"I can smell [rotten eggs / sulfur] in my [LOCATION - kitchen, basement, etc]."

"I have [evacuated the home / am still inside]."

"There are [NUMBER] people in my household."

"I have [turned off / not turned off] the gas supply."

#### **Common questions the operator will ask:**

1. What is your exact address?
2. Is anyone experiencing symptoms (dizziness, nausea, headaches)?
3. How many people are in the home?
4. Have you evacuated the building?
5. Can you identify where the smell is strongest?
6. Have you turned off the gas supply?
7. Are any doors and windows open?
8. Do you have any gas-powered appliances running?
9. How long have you noticed the smell?
10. What is your name and callback number?

#### **Important reminders:**

- Do NOT touch exposed wires or sparking outlets
- Do NOT use water on an electrical fire
- Turn off the main breaker if safe to do so
- Evacuate if there is smoke or fire
- Do not re-enter until cleared by professionals

## EMERGENCIES

### 4. Gas Leaks & Poisoning

If you suspect you may have ingested or been exposed to poisonous substances, **ALWAYS** call the Peacekeepers **(450) 632-6505**

If it is a food poisoning issue, KSCS Environmental Health Services will be contacted.

#### **What to say:**

"Hello, I need to report a possible poisoning."

"My address is [YOUR ADDRESS]."

"[I / my child / a family member] has been exposed to [SUBSTANCE - cleaning product, medication, food, carbon monoxide, etc.]."

"It was [ingested / inhaled / touched the skin] approximately [TIME] ago."

"The person is [conscious / unconscious / vomiting / having difficulty breathing]."

"They are [AGE] years old and weigh approximately [WEIGHT]."

#### **Common questions the operator will ask:**

1. What is your exact address?
2. What substance was the person exposed to?
3. How much was ingested or how long was the exposure?
4. How long ago did the exposure occur?
5. What are the person's current symptoms?
6. Is the person conscious and breathing?
7. What is the age and weight of the person?
8. Has the person vomited?
9. Do you have the container or label of the substance?
10. What is your name and callback number?



#### **Important reminders:**

- Do NOT induce vomiting unless told to
- Keep the substance container for reference
- Stay calm and speak clearly
- Do NOT hang up until the operator says to
- Monitor breathing and consciousness

# EMERGENCIES

## 4. Weather-Related Emergencies

Weather can cause substantial damage to your home and even result in injury. Common weather phenomena include: hail storms, heavy rain, intense wind, snow storms, and heat waves.

Be sure to reference the 'Homeowners Maintenance Manual' to what you can be doing seasonally to protect your house from the changes in weather.

Should you encounter a weather-related emergency that impacts the habitability of your home, the best course of action is to evacuate the house until damage can be assessed and is deemed safe to re-enter.

Not all damage from a weather event warrants evacuation, much of the damage often includes leaks, and damaged siding or roofing. Although they do not require evacuation, homeowners should still assess the exterior of the house.

This allows you to gauge the damage and start planning the next steps for repair.

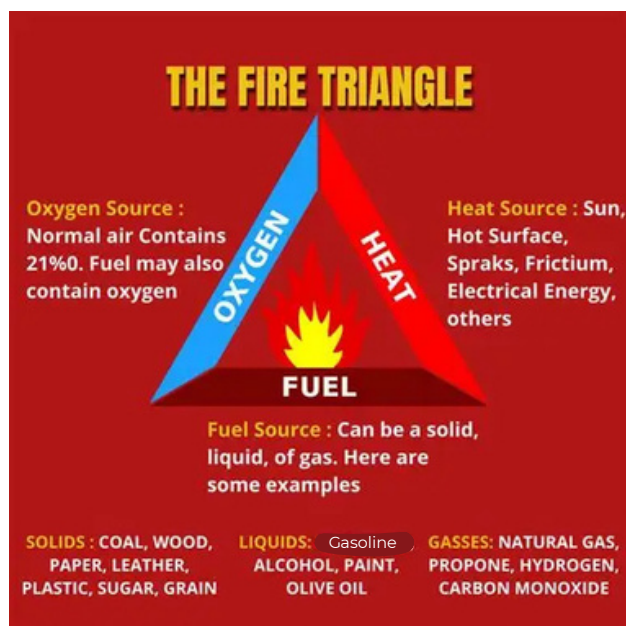
## Additional Information

You can always call the Kahnawake Fire Brigade [\(450\) 632-2010](tel:4506322010) for any questions you may have as well as KSCS Environmental Health Services [\(450\) 632-6880](tel:4506326880).

The KFB also facilitates CPR trainings for community members. Contact [cpr@kfb.ca](mailto:cpr@kfb.ca) for more information.

Below is the Fire Triangle which identifies the three elements a fire needs to stay lit and spread. Removing any one of these elements will effectively put out the fire.

See [Pyrotec<sup>6</sup>](#) for information on different types of fire and how to put them out.



# External References

Scan the QR code below to see the full list of online resources that provide more information on health, safety & emergencies!



Niá:wen! Thank you!



