

Surviving Home Maintenance with Senior Loved Ones Aging in Place

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April 20, 2012

The current generation of seniors has lived a life of building, fixing, and re-purposing before the green movement took shape. They imagined what was needed, created it and kept it running.

Asking for help to repair an item or spruce up part of the house is something they didn't do and often still don't do, especially if it means paying someone for a task they feel they should be doing ([Home Advisor](#) is one resource to consider).

However, as caregivers we know that there comes a time when an aging parent or grandparent should sit back and let others do tasks for them. Well, they don't have to "sit back" and watch others do it. Naturally, being the supervisor of a household chore is also an important part of the job and that is what we should be steering our aging parents toward for their own safety.

When we perform home maintenance tasks for our senior loved ones, especially under their "supervision", we get more than the knowledge they are staying safe. This is also an opportunity to spend time with them and sometimes a chance for the transfer of knowledge or family history. Many times a household task will remind our elders of similar scenes from their younger years.



Senior Safety Considerations for Home Repairs and Upkeep

1. Keep off the ladder! Encourage your senior to stay off any ladder when he or she is alone at home. Inspect any ladders in the home to be sure they are in good repair, not wobbly or with missing treads. Discard any unsafe ladders that can't be safely repaired. Always have someone standing by when a ladder is in use to steady it and react in case of a fall.
2. Regularly search your senior's home for frayed electrical wires or outlets that may cause a potential for electrocution or be fire hazards. Replace any small or large appliance that has frayed cords or plugs or have someone repair it if possible. Staying on top of any potential electrical problem will allow you to prevent your senior "fixing" any unsafe electrical wires your senior may notice before you do.
3. Schedule a handyperson in your area (or yourself, friends or family members) to clean roofs and gutters at specific intervals, such as seasonally, to remove debris like fallen leaves, pine needles or branches before your senior decides he can do it himself. Keeping gutters clean and free flowing will reduce water damage in the future and save you and your senior from other repairs.

4. Schedule a lawn service to not only do routine yard work when doing so isn't safe for your loved one but also prune branches that might be hitting the windows or blocking the view or potentially housing unwanted pests. Your senior may decide to take cutting back the bushes into their own hands if they can no longer see the birds at the feeder or are awakened by noises caused by limbs hitting the house in the wind. Some overgrown trees can lead to invasion by pests into your senior's attic (as we know firsthand) causing more trouble than you could imagine!
5. If your senior's home has a crawl space, inspect it at least annually looking for fire dangers, rotting floor joists, water intrusion, insect/termite invasion or other hidden dangers that might harm your senior. Older homes have been known to give way under the feet of elders if not properly maintained.
6. Check all lights to be sure the bulbs do not need to be replaced. When you visit during the day to provide care, the light bulbs are not often used. However, in the dark of night when your senior gets up and finds that the bathroom light bulb or hallway fixture is not working is not the time for them to be looking for a bulb and standing on a chair to replace it. Turning on each switch to check them out in the daylight is a good safety measure that doesn't take much time.
7. When it is time to put up or take down storm windows, put up or clean the screens or wash windows, consider bringing in a helper to do the job. Be sure to be proactive so that your senior doesn't try to tackle this hefty job before you line someone up to do the work.

These and other tasks around the house are things that your senior loved one has probably done alone throughout his or her life. Your senior may think they are still capable of completing some or all of these tasks, but for his or her own safety, this should be given to someone else.

If it comes down to hiring someone to perform work for your senior loved ones, we want to make sure only qualified people do work and that our loved ones are safe in their homes. If you don't know someone or are a remote family caregiver, it might help to know that [Home Advisor](#) is a resource we've found to locate the type of help needed when you don't know where else to turn. They may have good options for you to consider when help is needed.

While we're at it, we suggest you consider taking some of this advice beyond senior loved ones — to yourself! You may also consider having a handyperson do these things in your own home while you care for your senior. It would help lift some of your own burdens and avoid some of the overwhelm that so often impacts family caregivers.