

accidents don't have to happen

DIY Safety

Home maintenance during the coronavirus outbreak

At first sight a long period of confinement at home during the coronavirus might seem to be a good time to catch up on all those DIY tasks that have been waiting for your attention.

It may also be that, in a situation where you cannot have skilled maintenance and handyperson services coming into the home, you will be tempted to “have a go” at jobs that you are not fully equipped to do.

Before you undertake DIY projects during this period, please stop and think

1. At this time of year when people's attentions turn to DIY activities, hospitals see a significant rise in people attending as a result of DIY injuries. *Now is not a good time to put added pressure on the very services that are on the frontline of treating people who have contracted the coronavirus.*
2. If you put yourself out of action as a result of a serious injury you will not be able to call for back up from friends or family members to look after you or your children while you recover
3. To ensure that children are kept safe, many DIY tasks need to be done when they are not around. Now that schools have closed for an indefinite period, homes will be very busy for a while, increasing the likelihood of accidents if DIY activities are attempted. Anything involving tools, chemicals, the use of ladders, etc. is increasing the risk of a family member having an accident
4. Most stores are closed and supplies of DIY materials are likely to be restricted. If a job is started but cannot be finished due to the lack of availability of materials or because of restrictions on movement, you may put part of your living space out of action at a time when it is most needed. You may also be tempted to take short cuts which mean that job is not finished safely.

RoSPA recognises that there will always be a need for some routine household maintenance to be undertaken, and in these cases recommends that you take extra care to follow clear safety advice.

RoSPA also recommends that during the current crisis, larger scale DIY projects and unnecessary maintenance should be put on hold until the pressures on NHS have eased.

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If there are essential jobs that need to be done during this time please consider the following:

- Ensure that you have read all the instructions when tackling DIY and gardening projects, and have taken all the recommended precautionary measures when using tools. Children learn by being inquisitive, and will often want to copy what adults are doing, so supervision is key with any sort of home or gardening project
- Always use personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves, goggles, helmet, and facemask and safety shoes as appropriate and recommended for the task, and follow manufacturers' instructions
- Ensure good supervision of children and keep pets away from where you are working
- Keep household chemicals in their original containers (never decant them into unmarked containers)
- Keep all tools, paint and chemicals out of the reach of children and tidy up at the end of your task
- Stop and disconnect all electrical appliances and tools before repairing or cleaning them
- Only use tools/materials/products in accordance with their instructions
- When working with power tools, use an RCD (residual current device) if your home is not already wired with one
- Avoid falls from height by checking a ladder's condition before use and ensuring someone is holding the ladder in place for you.
- Always operate within the range of your skills, ability and experience.

RoSPA recommends that to avoid injury you should always consider safety when planning DIY activity, but during the coronavirus outbreak there is the added incentive that by staying safe you will be avoiding placing additional pressure on NHS services.

For more information, see www.rospa.com/Home-Safety/Advice/General/Preventing-Accidents-in-the-Home