

What's behind your walls? 3 household dangers you can't always see

(BPT) - When it comes to keeping your family and home safe, you're probably familiar with the most common household hazards that can occur. And chances are you have taken precautions to prevent most hazards by installing devices like smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers.

But what about the dangers you can't see? Hazards created in places like attics, basements, or even less visible spots like behind walls can cause significant home damage or health dangers if not addressed.

Consider these suggestions for addressing several hidden hazards in your own home that may be out of sight but shouldn't be out of mind.

Is it time to check for radon risk?

Because radon gas is colorless, odorless and tasteless, it can easily be overlooked. Yet high levels of the naturally occurring gas in the home can be carcinogenic over time. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends checking radon levels at least every two years as radon flow can increase over a timescale longer than a year.

With that in mind, it's important to get a radon test kit to determine whether your radon levels are problematic. If so, you will need to look into mitigation — which can be as simple as adding ventilation to your attic or sealing cracks in your foundation.

Are your water pipes stable?

We don't always see or regularly inspect our pipes. A leaking pipe in your home may just seem like another annoyance, but if not addressed immediately, it can cause significant damage to floors, ceilings and furniture and may even attract bugs. Leaks almost always happen at the pipe joints. While tape and fillers can help address a leak temporarily, you'll need a plumber's help to replace a pipe for a more permanent fix.

Two steps that may help prevent leaking pipes:

1. If your home is older, ask your plumber if you have galvanized or polybutylene pipes; those materials may have eroded over time and could eventually fail.
2. If you live somewhere that gets extremely cold in the winter, allow cold water to drip slowly and continually from each faucet and keep your thermostat at the same temperature 24-7.

Are you aware that arc-faults can cause electrical fires?

A term many homeowners may be unfamiliar with is [arc-fault](#), a malfunction in electric wiring circuits that can be caused by loose connections or damaged cords. An arc-fault may occur when a homeowner accidentally damages an electrical wire by driving a nail into a wall or pinching a cord under furniture. That damaged wire can become a significant hazard, generating heat of up to 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit that could potentially spark an electrical fire within wood framing or insulation. *In fact, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), local U.S. firefighters responded to about 35,000 home electrical fires annually between 2012-2016 attributed to electrical distribution and lighting equipment.

Fortunately, the threat of arc-faults and electrical fires can be significantly reduced by the simple installation of [Leviton's SmartlockPro AFCI outlet](#). A best-seller among Leviton's highly effective portfolio of electrical safety devices for the home, AFCI outlets are designed to prevent electrical fires by interrupting your power when a dangerous arc is detected.

Staying on top of these and other potential hazards in your home can keep your family safe from harm and protect your property from damage now and in the future. Ask your local plumber to examine leaks, learn more about potential radon issues at EPA.gov and turn to www.leviton.com/electricalhero for more tips on how to prevent electrical fires.