

Safe Kitchens ● ● ● **General Information**

Research studies to determine the causes of home accidents point up the fact that the level of activity in the kitchen usually exceeds that of any other room in the house. As a major activity center, the kitchen ranks high as a potential accident environment, especially during the peak activity periods that are devoted to food preparation. It is during these highest activity periods in the kitchen that the hazards associated with the use of kitchen appliances are also at their highest accident potential. Moving hot utensils to and from the range and oven, activating light or appliance switches near the sink, or operating a garbage disposal unit can precipitate injurious accidents. The kitchen environment should be a well-lighted, well-ventilated, safe, and pleasant area in which to work.

Kitchen safety is influenced by kitchen efficiency, which results from careful, deliberate plans by the architect and designer. Once a house has been built and the equipment installed, the correction of errors or elimination of hazardous conditions becomes costly and, in some instances, impossible without major structural renovations. It is, therefore, extremely important that proper planning for the efficient use of the kitchen and the safety of the occupants be given priority in the early stages of planning and design.

Safe kitchens result from choosing suitable space standards, from planning the kitchen's location and arrangement in relationship to the entire house, and from planning the type and location of fixtures and appliances for the most efficient and effective operation. To accomplish these ends successfully requires a realistic determination of the proper amount of space to allow for storage, appliances, counters, and traffic or other activity. It also requires establishing the relationship of the kitchen parameters to the anticipated traffic flows and living habits of the occupants.

A safe, well-planned kitchen is one designed so that only a minimum number of steps is required between the most frequently used work centers; i.e., the sink, oven/range unit, refrigerator, and other work areas. However, this area of heaviest traffic must not be so small as to be crowded, thereby increasing the probability of accidents. Although it may not be feasible to establish a fixed design that is optimum from a safety viewpoint, it is desirable to specify alternate configurations and dimensional ranges within which the placement of fixtures and appliances that have proven to be conducive to a safer kitchen design.

Other publications in this series on the subject of safe kitchens include the following:

- MI-170 Safe Kitchens . . . Work Triangle & Traffic Flow
- MI-171 Safe Kitchens . . . Cabinets
- MI-172 Safe Kitchens . . . Doors
- MI-173 Safe Kitchens . . . Appliances
- MI-174 Safe Kitchens . . . Electrical & Lighting
- MI-175 Safety Checklist for Kitchens

Terminology

KITCHENS

Work Triangle - An area enclosed by imaginary lines connecting the center front of the sink, refrigerator, and cooking units. This is the area of greatest activity in the kitchen.

Task Lighting - Provision for lighting of a particular area within the kitchen to enhance performance of a certain category of tasks. Example: Illumination at kitchen sink that is sufficient for cleaning and inspecting food, etc.

Before building, consult the BOCA code.

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