# Safe Floors ● ● ●

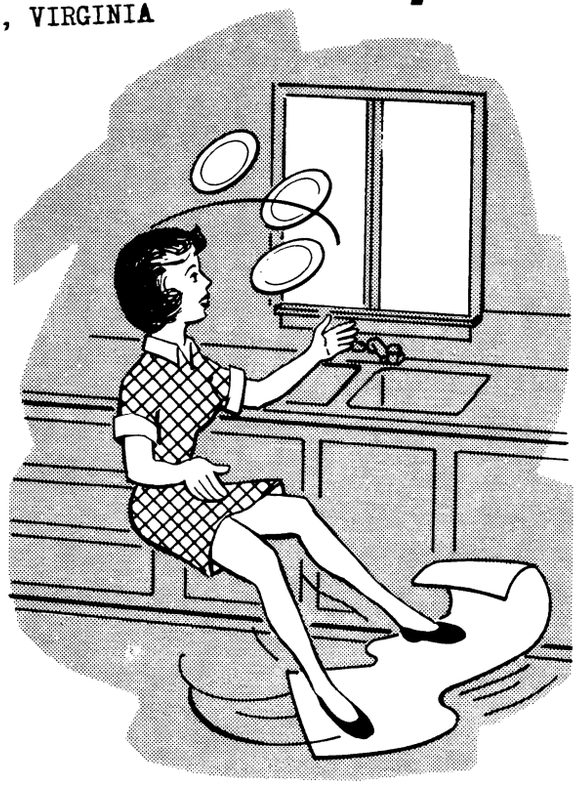


from the series *Design for Safe Habitat*

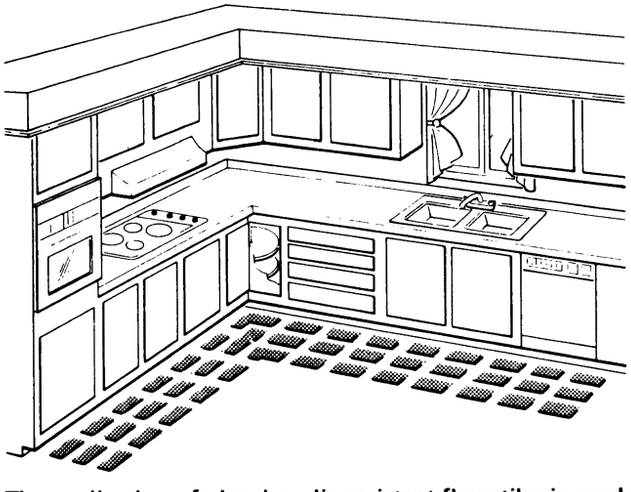
# Kitchens, Bathrooms, Basements, & Laundry Rooms

Kitchens, bathrooms, basements, and laundry rooms are frequently subjected to water spills. A large majority of the homes constructed in recent years have tile coverings; i.e., ceramic, vinyl, asphalt, or rubber on the kitchen and bathroom floors. Others have terrazzo or quarry tile, and, more recently, carpet is being used to some extent. When water or other liquid is spilled on some of these finishes, the slip-resistant qualities of the finish are reduced considerably. This is especially true for those surfaces which have been cleaned and coated with wax.

Although most carpets have acceptable slip-resistant characteristics when wet, they can pose other health hazards. When consideration is being given to installation of modern "indoor/outdoor" synthetic carpet to increase slip-resistance of floors in bathrooms and kitchens, the architect and designer should also consider the possibility of biological contamination in the form of fungi, insects, food particles, etc. Severe climatological or environmental factors may tend to encourage this type of potential contamination to such a degree as to render the aesthetic and maintenance advantages negligible. Tests have shown that some disease-causing bacteria survived even after carpet has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Germs have been discovered in "clean" carpet that had been in storage 20 weeks in a completely sterile container. Fungi that cause ringworm and athlete's foot have been found in carpet that had been scrubbed with a germicide and stored for periods of up to eight months.



**Highly polished floor surfaces provide little slip resistance, especially in areas subject to water spillage. The use of throw rugs in these areas magnifies the safety hazard.**



**The application of abrasive, slip-resistant floor tiles in work areas subject to water spillage will reduce the probability of falls.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Alternative measures recommended to reduce potential hazards within kitchens, bathrooms, laundry rooms, basements and similar areas include the following:**

- **Use of non-glazed and/or slip-resistant tile.**
- **Placement of slip-resistant strips or cleats on the floor where water spillage is most likely to occur, including at kitchen sinks and stoves, in front of cabinets, at lavatories and tubs, and in laundry rooms and similar areas.**
- **Use of a floor material which has an inherent or applied slip-resistant surface. From an aesthetic viewpoint, this probably offers the most practicable solution because of the ever-increasing range of floor coverings available to the building industry. Among these coverings are compressed cork, rubberized material, painted surface using paint containing carborundum or similar abrasives, etc.**

**Before building, consult the BOCA code.**

Extension Division • Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University • MI-196 • March 1978
Prepared by Helen L. Wells, Housing Specialist
Originally prepared for the Office of Research and Technology, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "A Design Guide for Home Safety" HUD-RT-17 January 1972
Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. W. R. Van Dresser, Dean, Extension Division, Cooperative Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061.