

The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) - The 29 Hazards

This guide looks at the 29 hazards and the most vulnerable age groups.

1. Damp and Mould Growth

Caused by dust mites, mould or fungal growths caused by dampness and/or high humidities. It includes threats to mental health and social wellbeing caused by living with damp, damp staining and/or mould growth.

Most vulnerable: 14 years or less

2. Excess Cold

From sub-optimal indoor temperatures.

Most vulnerable: 65 years plus

3. Excess Heat

Caused by excessively high indoor air temperatures

Most vulnerable: 65 years plus

4. Asbestos (and MMF)

Caused by exposure to asbestos fibres and manufactured mineral fibres (MMF).

Most vulnerable: no specific group

5. Biocides

Threat to health from those chemicals used to treat timber and mould growth in dwellings. Insecticides and rodenticides to control pest infestations (e.g. cockroaches or rats and mice), these are not considered for the purposes of the HHSRS.

Most vulnerable: no specific group

6. Carbon Monoxide and Fuel Combustion Products

Hazards due to excess levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and smoke in the dwelling's atmosphere.

Most vulnerable: CO, 65 years plus. NO₂, SO₂ and smoke, no specific group

7. Lead

Threats to health from the ingestion of lead.

Most vulnerable: under 3 years

8. Radiation

This category covers the threats to health from radon gas and its daughters, primarily airborne, but also radon dissolved in water. While rare, leakage from microwave ovens might also be considered. Evidence of health risks from low-level exposure to electro-magnetic fields from phone masts have not, to date, been proven.

Most vulnerable: all persons aged between 60 and 64 years who have had lifetime exposure to radon.

9. Uncombusted Fuel Gas

The threat of asphyxiation due to fuel gas escaping into the atmosphere within a dwelling.

Most vulnerable: no specific group

10. Volatile Organic Compounds

VOCs are a diverse group of organic chemicals which includes formaldehyde, that are gaseous at room temperature, and are found in a wide variety of materials in the home.

Most vulnerable: no specific group

11. Crowding and Space

Health hazards linked to a lack of living space for sleeping and normal family household life.

Most vulnerable: no specific group

12. Entry by Intruders

Problems keeping a dwelling secure against unauthorised entry and the maintenance of defensible space.

Most vulnerable: no specific group

13. Lighting

Threats to physical and mental health linked to inadequate natural and/or artificial light. It includes the psychological effect associated with the view from the dwelling through glazing.

Most vulnerable: no specific group

14. Noise

Threats to physical and mental health caused by noise exposure inside the dwelling or within its curtilage.

Most vulnerable: no specific group

15. Domestic Hygiene, Pests and Refuse

Health hazards due to poor design, layout and construction to the point where the dwelling cannot be readily kept clean and hygienic; access into, and harbourage within, the dwelling for pests; and inadequate and unhygienic provision for storing and disposal of household waste.

Most vulnerable: no specific

16. Food Safety

Threats of infection due to inadequate facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food.

Most vulnerable: no specific group

17. Personal Hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage

Threats of infection and threats to mental health associated with personal hygiene, including personal washing and clothes washing facilities, sanitation and drainage.

Most vulnerable: children under 5

18. Water Supply

The quality and adequacy of the water supply for drinking and for domestic purposes such as cooking, washing, cleaning and sanitation. Also threats to health from contamination by bacteria, protozoa, parasites, viruses, and chemical pollutants.

Most vulnerable: no specific group

19. Falls associated with Baths, etc.

Falls associated with a bath, shower or similar facility.

Most vulnerable: 60 years plus

20. Falling on Level Surfaces, etc

Falls on any level surface such as floors, yards and paths. It also includes falls associated with trip steps, thresholds, or ramps, where the change in level is less than 300mm.

Most vulnerable: 60 years old

21. Falling on Stairs, etc

Fall associated with stairs, steps and ramps where the change in level is greater than 300mm. It includes falls on internal stairs or ramps within the dwelling, external steps or ramps within the curtilage of the dwelling, internal common stairs or ramps within the building, access to the dwelling, and to shared facilities or means of escape in case of fire. It also includes falls over guarding (balustrading).

Most vulnerable: 60 years old

22. Falling between Levels

Falls from one level to another, inside or outside a dwelling, where the difference in levels is more than 300mm. For example falls out of windows, falls from balconies or landings, falls from accessible roofs, into basement walls and over garden retaining walls.

Most vulnerable: under 5 years

23. Electrical Hazards

Hazards from electric shock and electricity burns, including from lightning strikes.

Most vulnerable: under 5 years

24. Fire

Threats from uncontrolled fire and associated smoke. It excludes injuries from clothing catching alight, which appears to be common when people attempt to put out a fire. It does not include clothing catching alight from a controlled fire by reaching across a gas flame or an open fire used for space heating.

Most vulnerable: 60 years plus

25. Flames, Hot Surfaces, etc

Burns or injuries caused by contact with a hot flame or fire, and contact with hot objects or hot non-water based liquids, and scalds – injuries caused by contact with hot liquids and vapours. It includes burns caused by clothing catching alight from a controlled fire or flame.

Most vulnerable: under 5 years

26. Collision and Entrapment

This category includes risks of physical injury from; a) trapping body parts in architectural feature, such as trapping limbs or fingers in doors or windows; most vulnerable under 5 years. b) striking (colliding with) objects such as architectural glazing, windows, doors, low ceilings and walls.

Most vulnerable: 16 years over

27. Explosions

Threat from the blast of an explosion, from debris generated by the blast, and from the partial or total collapse of a building as the result of an explosion

Most vulnerable: no specific group

28. Position and Operability of Amenities, etc

Threats of physical strain associated with functional space and other features at dwellings.

Most vulnerable: 60 years plus

29. Structural Collapse and Falling Elements

The threat of the dwelling collapsing, or of an element or a part of the fabric being displaced or falling because of inadequate fixing or disrepair, or as a result of adverse weather conditions. Structural failure may occur internally or externally.

Most vulnerable: no specific Group