



SAFETY IN THE HOME

Emily Fowler looks at how to keep your cat safe in and around your home by avoiding some of the most common hazards



We all want our cats to be as safe and well protected as possible but there are a number of common household items that can be very dangerous for them. Don't panic though, because as long as you're aware of the potential dangers, and know what you need to do to minimise them, you won't need to wrap your cats in cotton wool to keep them safe!

Tumble driers/washing machines:

The open door of your tumble drier or washing machine can be a tempting

proposition to a cat in search of a private place to snooze but if the machine gets turned on with your cat inside, the results would be devastating.

Make sure that you close the doors of any appliances that aren't in use and always check inside before you put clothes in them.

Toilets:

We know that cats are naturally curious (particularly when they're young), so leaving the toilet lid up can be very inviting to an inquisitive kitten and a slippery

toilet bowl won't be very easy for them to get out of. It's not just the risk of kittens or cats falling in and drowning either; the chemical toilet cleaners and bleach that we use in our toilets will be toxic to a cat that drinks from the toilet bowl, causing vomiting, chemical burns or even death.

If you get into the habit of keeping the toilet seat down, and ask guests to do the same, you remove the risks the toilet bowl can pose. Whenever I've had kittens I've always put a sign above the toilet reminding people to put the lid down. Visitors probably thought I was

mad (at least, more mad than usual!) but at least there were no kitten/toilet related accidents.

Cables and flexes:

Electrical cables and flexes might seem like fun chew toys to some cats but if they manage to chew all the way through the rubber to the wiring inside, it can cause electrical burns around their mouth or even electric injury to their heart or lungs.

There are a number of different cord protectors, covers and organisers you can buy to keep temptation at bay and if you think your cat might be trying to chew cables out of boredom, make sure you include plenty of play time in your cat's daily routine.

Barbeques:

With barbeque season upon us, it's nice for our cats to join in the fun but make sure you don't leave any rubbish lying around that your cat could get into. Food scraps can upset feline tummies, cooked bones can splinter and cause internal damage to your poor puss and kebab sticks can be a serious health hazard - don't forget Bella the kebab stick cat, featured in a recent issue for having a section of kebab stick stuck in her tummy!

Barbeques are of course hot, and it's not just the flames that can burn your cat if they get too close - even the embers could cause severe burns and your cat won't necessarily realise they're hot till it's too late.

Building works:

If you're having building work done, be it a spot of DIY or a big renovation job, it's best to keep your cats out of the way. Apart from the fact that the noise and mess is likely to be very stressful to

your feline friends, building works also mean sharp tools lying around and spaces that weren't there before.

If you're having a lot of work done, and it's convenient to, sending your cat to stay with friends or family is probably the best option. If that's not possible, make sure to have a 'cat room' with food, water, toys and a litter tray in, and keep your cat in there while the building work is going on.

Folding furniture:

Reclining chairs have inner areas that might look like a very attractive napping spot to your cat, so before you sit back and relax, make sure there isn't a cat hiding inside the recliner mechanism first.

Similarly, folding indoor clothes airers left unattended can look like a fun climbing frame for adventurous cats but if they snap shut, they can cause serious injury or even death.

Hot oven tops:

Stove tops can be a real hazard to cats who like to jump up on worktops, particularly the electric type that don't produce an actual flame - just get very hot! Ideally your cat will already be trained not to jump on the kitchen worktops, but if that's not the case, this is the time to do it - for your cat's own protection as well as for hygiene reasons.

Sewing kits:

If you're handy with a needle and thread, make sure that everything in your sewing kit is tidied away and put in a secure place when you're finished. Thread is an attractive toy to cats but if swallowed it can cause a blockage inside your cat and, if there's a needle attached to the thread, it's going to be so much worse. Although it is possible for a cat to escape unscathed after swallowing a nee-



dle, it's likely to do a lot of damage to the throat, oesophagus or stomach.

If you think your cat has ingested something hazardous or toxic, it's essential to make an emergency appointment to see a vet straight away. Even if it turns out your cat is fine, better safe than sorry! 🐾

