

Family Matters

Creating A Safe Haven The Entire Family Can Enjoy

(NAPSA)—Safety never goes out of style, especially in decorating a home that children live in.

Take a quick glance around your home and you'll likely find that your family room is indeed the most appropriately named area of the house. It's where families discuss the day's events, bond over a board game and savor each other's company while taking a much-needed break from the outside world.

As you create a true haven for quality time with loved ones, the American Home Furnishings Alliance recommends that you take a step back and look around to ensure the room is set up with your family's safety in mind.

Many consumers make an exciting high-tech purchase of home entertainment equipment, only to place it on an older piece of furniture—often something not equipped to hold its size or weight. If you're splurging on a shiny new flat-screen TV, for example, don't expect your old entertainment center to be its safest resting place or to be able to provide the support needed to avoid a tip-over.

Instead, shop for a quality piece that's within your budget and sized for your new television. Look for a style that has enough storage for all of your television accessories—DVD player, VCR, cable box and video games. Avoid having these items stacked on top



The Metropolitan View console and hutch from Hooker Furniture holds a plasma TV and decorative accents.

of the television that could lead to a child reaching for something and inadvertently bringing the television or other heavy items down on top of them.

If you have small children in the home, pay special attention to the stability of your furniture—including doors, latches, and wobbly legs—in order to prevent shifting or even a fall as young ones play around the room. Beware of glass or wood shelves in an entertainment center that could be irresistible to young climbers. It is advisable to affix a large entertainment center to the wall behind it as well as avoid placing it on carpet that increases the instability of the unit.

When it comes to the upholstered furniture where you'll relax

and unwind, select only upholstery that carries the gold UFAC tag to ensure the manufacturer of the piece has agreed to meet the construction criteria outlined by the Upholstered Furniture Action Council.

The voluntary UFAC program, developed 23 years ago, has been credited with contributing to the nearly 80 percent reduction in the number of upholstered furniture fires started by smoldering cigarettes. The gold hangtag ensures you're making a safer purchase for your family. And remember to keep matches, lighters and candles away from children and from upholstery.

As with your primary pieces of furniture, keep safety in mind as you regularly inspect lamp cords for frayed areas that could pose a safety hazard. Take care that all electrical wires—lamps, computers, TVs—are managed properly, and secured in up-to-date outlets or power strips. Be sure to maintain the strictest safety around the fireplace, screening off what could be tempting and dangerous to tiny hands.

With advance planning and conscientious monitoring, your family room can be the safe haven you long for—and a retreat at the end of the workday with those you treasure most.

Learn about selecting furniture at www.findyourfurniture.com.