

SAFETY AND HEALTH ISSUES RESULTING FROM HOARDING

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Fire hazard:

- combustible materials near stove, radiators, heating vents, electrical outlets, extension cords, lamps
- resident may be a smoker

Blocked exits:

- inability for emergency personnel to enter home
- inability for resident to exit home in case of emergency

Risk of falls:

- resulting from cluttered pathways throughout home
- particularly risky with elderly and residents using canes and walkers

Physical harm caused by items falling from piles of clutter

Lack of routine home maintenance:

- toilets and sinks may become inaccessible and unusable
- loss of heat, running water, refrigeration
- non-working smoke alarms

Structural damage to building from increased weight and volume of clutter

Risk of eviction and homelessness

Impaired functioning

- poor hygiene and grooming (depression, cluttered bathtub)
- poor nutrition (inability to use stove and refrigerator)
- inattention to medical needs (cessation of medications and routine medical exams)
- inadequate financial management (non-payment of bills; inability to locate in clutter)
- difficulty cleaning around clutter
- sleeping on floor instead of bed

Increased health problems

- unsanitary conditions resulting in molds, bacteria, dust and dirt (exacerbating asthma and other pulmonary conditions, allergic reactions, headaches)
 - mice, rat, roach, bedbug infestation
 - hoarding of animal feces and decomposing animal remains (hanta virus, tapeworm, psittacosis, cat scratch disease)
- in severe situations, service providers should take precautions by wearing masks, gowns and gloves when entering homes

Mental health problems

- isolation: inability to socialize at home; over-identification with objects
- anxiety
- depression

- dementia (will need additional assistance)
- psychosis (delusions, hallucinations, paranoia, bipolar disease, schizophrenia)
- obsessive-compulsive disorder
- attention-deficit/hyperactive disorder
- difficulty with decision-making
- need for control
- inability to organize
- inability to problem-solve
- fearful (that others will obtain their information; forgetting or losing items)
- uncomfortable with space created as home is de-cluttered
- perfectionistic tendency to gain control over environment
- denial or minimization of problem