THE ELDERLY AND EVERYDAY LIFE SECURITY
- Finnish Problems and Solutions

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1. Internal security programme and implementation in Eastern Finland

A safer tomorrow – Internal security programme (Ministry of the Interior 40/2012) defines:

“Internal security’ is a state of society where everyone can enjoy rights and freedoms guaranteed by the rule of law without fear or insecurity caused by crime, disorder, accidents, or indeed any national or international phenomena.”

According to Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen’s government programme Finland aims to become the safest country in Europe by 2015. It means a lot of commitment and involvement from individuals, families and communities to achieve the government’s aim. Independent work of authorities but also cooperative work is needed. (Internal security implementation programme in Eastern Finland 2012, 5.)

National internal security programme includes 64 actions. In the implementation programme there is a proposal for primary actions in Eastern Finland. There is also a proposal of how citizens and various authorities respond to these actions. Regional State Administrative Agencies, local institutions, such as municipalities, organizations, associations and business life, are responsible for putting the internal security programme into practice. (Internal security implementation programme in Eastern Finland 2012, 5.)

In Eastern Finland the following sections of security are emphasised:

1. To stress individuals’, families’, and communities’ own responsibility for security
2. To secure a safe environment for children and young people to grow up
3. To secure safe life for the elderly
4. To reduce risks in living environment and in moving
5. To construct cooperative models for security work
6. To improve and progress business security
7. To progress database for security issues.
The purpose of the programme is to support and encourage municipalities and local communities to cooperate in security planning and action. (Internal security implementation programme of Eastern Finland 2012, 5.)

2. Risks of the elderly in everyday life

2.1 Falls

Falls are the most usual type of accident among old people. In North Karelia 75 / 100 000 of old people over 65 years die because of falling accidents. (Internal security implementation programme in Eastern Finland 2012, 8.)

Most of the falls occur in homes, but a lot of accidents occur in care homes and hospitals as well. (Internal security implementation programme in Eastern Finland 2012, 8.)

2.2 Fire safety

Fire safety is an important part of everyday life security. Ministry of Environment made additional orders for fire safety in buildings in 2009. Locations of fire alarms must be planned carefully. According to the present orders there must be one fire alarm per 60 square metre. (Palovaroitin.fi, 2013.)

The problem is that fire alarms may be missing in some buildings. Sometimes batteries may have run out of power. One problem is that there may not be available a fire extinguisher or a fire blanket.

Old, broken extension cables are a risk. At the worst they may start a fire. Also old gas cookers, broken electrical devices or food left on the stove are typical risk cases in apartments. (Suomen Pelastusalan Keskusjärjestö, 2013.)
In rural areas it may take a long time for rescue units to arrive. Sometimes it can take one hour or more to wait for the first fire truck to arrive.

### 2.3 Criminality, abuse and mistreat

Criminality, abuse and mistreat may be risks for the security of the elderly. Frail old people may not be able to defend themselves.

There are different kinds of abuse and mistreat, e.g. physical and mental violence or sexual and financial abuse. There may be neglect of care and help or restriction and violation of freedom. (Kätketyt äänet – Ikääntyneisiin kohdistuva kaltoinkohtelu 2008, 5-6)

When abusing and mistreating occurs, it often takes place in places presumed safe. It means places where people feel that there is nothing to be afraid of. The offender may be a blood relative or someone on the nursing staff. (Kätketyt äänet – Ikääntyneisiin kohdistuva kaltoinkohtelu 2008, 6) For example, the son who is caring for his mother can steal or cheat her money or the nurse, who does not care properly, is too busy, or does not pay sufficient attention to the elderly.

### 2.4 Safe housing

It's important that the environment where you live is safe. Many various things should be taken into consideration while planning safe living environment. When planning an apartment for the elderly it should be taken into account that, for example, the elderly may need different kind of aids, railings and anti-skid device. Colours and lightning in the apartment are also important. There is a danger of falling down if the lightning is dim.

Accessibility is vital important. One should be able to get in to an apartment in wheelchair. If the apartment is located in upper floors, an elevator big enough for both the wheelchair and the helper is needed.
Security locks help in case of danger of criminality and feeling of insecurity. A peephole is also needed. It should be located so that you can see through it even when sitting in the wheelchair.

### 2.5 Other problems

According to Internal security implementation programme of Eastern Finland (2012, 7) half of people more than 65 years old live alone. Social environment and social life may be narrowing, if the spouse has passed away, children live far away. Social life depends on neighbours, friends and other relatives. And if one does not keep in touch with people, one may become excluded or lonely. That may lead to depression.

Also, too busy, changing nursing staff and care facilities are a threat to elderly. The biggest problem seems to be nowadays that there is not enough staff. Hurry and scanty staff does not have time to discuss with the elderly. They may sometimes not even have time to do their job properly. The elderly may not want to tell the busy staff about their worries or pains. That can lead to more pain and illnesses.

The more there are old people the more there will be memory diseases. Drinking and drugs mixed together with alcohol seem to be a problem that should be taken into consideration. The sense of balance gets weaker and steps stagger because of drinking. This can lead to falling accidents. It is also serious if one uses medication and alcohol at the same time. Sometimes the consequences may be fatal.
3. Solutions for everyday life security of the elderly

3.1 Everyday life security in homes

When talking about everyday life security in homes one of the most important things is to progress accessibility and various support. There is need to increase information about aids, including security equipments when it comes to interior design.

A checklist of housing security is also useful when checking e.g. fire safety in the apartment. The list includes e.g. questions if electrical devices are safe, if the inhabitant is able to call for help in case of an emergency and if the fire alarm is working. (Suomen pelastusalan keskusjärjestö 2013) Guiding leaflets about mistreat and abuse are also useful. They tell what to do if you are feeling unsafe. Additionally, guides about technology equipments are required, e.g. how to use an alarm phone.

3.2 Everyday life security outside homes

Maintaining roads is an important part of everyday life security outside homes. Roads and streets should be in at least reasonable condition. In the wintertime roads and streets need gritting. Road safety is noteworthy also when talking about driving. Elderly drivers need to realise and think about risks ageing causes. Volunteers are needed to take frail old people for a walk outdoors.

3.3 Strengthening and maintaining social security

Social security is probably the most important part in everybody's lives. Good social relations effect positively to one’s mental wellbeing and are connected with physical condition as well. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) organize voluntary and peer activities supporting social life. There are also services transmitting volunteers. From these services elderly can
find volunteers, friends to talk to and to have a companion to various activities, for example to the theatre.

Municipalities organize various daytime activities for the elderly living in homes. Parishes have activities also for the elderly.

3.4 Strengthening and maintaining physical security

Physical condition helps to cope in everyday life and keeps up good mood. Good way of life, healthy nutrition and abstinence from alcohol and narcotics help to maintain good physical health. Physical condition can be strengthened for example by visiting sport parks where there is equipment for exercise and balance practice.

When an old person is staying in hospital it is important to make sure when it is the right time for him or her to leave the hospital and go back to home. Low amount of staff is one reason why patients might leave the hospital too soon. It has to be made sure that there is someone to look after the convalescent.

When people get old they have more illnesses and these illnesses must be controlled. It is important to educate the elderly how to use different kind of devices that help controlling their illnesses. One example of these devices is sphygmomanometer.

Summary

This paper tells about various problems and threats there are in elderly life. All the same, it must be remembered that most of the elderly live safely in peace and quiet.

The most common problems seem to be falls and accidents, like fire, criminality, abuse and mistreat. There are also other kind problems, such as limited social life, memory illnesses, too busy and/or scanty nursing staff or drinking problems.
There are also many solutions to the problems and many ways to prevent and ease these problems: everyday life security at home and outside home and strengthening and maintaining social and physical security.

There is no way to build totally secured life to anyone. One needs help from the others. Security is a complex and many-sided issue. It cannot be defined with one word. There are many threats and problems around us but if people work together and listen to each other, security increases and life get safer for everyone.
Useful links

The Alzheimer Society of Finland – Rehabilitation model, Weekly programme
http://www.muistiliitto.fi/eng/memory_illnesses/rehabilitation/

Hidden voices – Elder abuse, Safety guide for the elderly

Ikäteknologia, KÄKÄTE project. Easy technology for older people and care givers - Guide to care phones

Ikäteknologia, KÄKÄTE project. Easy technology for older people and care givers – Guide to home locking systems

Lappset – Health promoting exercise supports the well-being of the elderly
http://www.lappset.com/global/en/Products/Sport/Senior_Sport_-_Active_Ageing.iw3

Life 2.0 project
http://www.life2project.eu/

Liikenneturva – Elderly driver in traffic

Strength in old age – Health exercise programme for older adults
http://www.voimaavanhuuteen.fi/en/frontpage
References

A safer tomorrow – Internal security programme


KAMU – kaikki mukaan turvallisuustööhön – Itä-Suomen sisäisen turvallisuuden
toimeenpanosuunnitelma

http://www.avi.fi/documents/10191/147998/KAMU/c5efc449-a8a0-40ef-97d6-
b59669280c15 (read: May 2013)

Kätketyt äänet – Ikääntyneisiin kohdistuva kaltoin kohtelu – opas turvallisuudesta

http://www.vanhustyonkeskusliitto.fi/fin/opas_turvallisuudesta/ (read: May 2013)

Palovaroitin.fi – Palovaroitinta koskevat lait ja määräykset

http://www.palovaroitin.fi/lue-maarayksista (read: May 2013)

Suomen pelastusalan keskusjärjestö – Asumisturvallisuuden tarkistuslomake

http://www.spek.fi/loader.aspx?id=daf4155d-291d-4a19-8a16-3e03ec17b279 (read: May
2013)

Suomen pelastusalan keskusjärjestö – Estä tulipalojen syntyminen

http://www.spek.fi/Suomeksi/Paloturvallisuus/Jokakodin-paloturvallisuus/Esta-tulipalojen-
syntyminen (read: May 2013)