You should...

- Assess your child. Make sure he or she is mature enough to handle this responsibility. Ask your child how he or she feels about being alone.
- Define rules and expectations to help ensure your child maintains a daily routine while home alone.
- Keep a list of numbers close to the telephone including those for you, other trusted adults, 911 and other emergency services.
- Create practice situations and be sure your child understands what to do in specific emergencies such as a fire or loss of electricity.

Make sure your child knows...

- His or her full name, address and telephone number along with your full name and how to reach you.
- He or she should never open the door for someone unless that person is on a preapproved list of trusted adults you have provided.

Also make sure your child knows how to...

- Contact 911 in case of an emergency.
- Carry his or her key so it is hidden and secure.
- Lock the door after entering and make sure the home is secure.
- Tell callers you’re unavailable instead of saying he or she is home alone.
- Check with you immediately upon returning home to let you know he or she has safely arrived.

With everything parents have to juggle these days, the time may come when families have to leave a child home alone. There are a number of important things to consider before allowing your child to stay home without you.