

Fire Safety in the Home



Did you know?

- You're four times more likely to die in a fire if you don't have a smoke alarm that works.
- Around half of home fires are caused by cooking accidents.
- Two fires a day are started by candles.
- Every six days someone dies from a fire caused by a cigarette.
- About two fires a day are started by heaters.
- Faulty electrics (appliances, wiring and overloaded sockets) cause around 6,000 fires in the home across the country every year.

Protect your home with smoke alarms

The easiest way to protect your home and family from fire is with working smoke alarms.

Get them. Install them. Test them. They could save your life.



How to make sure your smoke alarms work

- If any of your smoke alarms have a one year battery, make sure it is changed every year. Only take the battery out when you need to replace it.
- Never disconnect or take the batteries out of your alarm if it goes off by mistake.

- Standard battery operated alarms are the cheapest option, but the batteries need to be replaced every year.
- A lot of people forget to test the batteries, so longer life batteries are better.
- Mains-powered alarms are powered by your home power supply. They need to be installed by a qualified electrician, but like battery alarms, they do require testing.
- Testing smoke alarms tests the smoke sensor as well as the power supply and/or battery.

Top tip:
Test it



Fitting your smoke alarms

The ideal position is on the ceiling, in the middle of a room, and on the hallway and landing, so you can hear an alarm throughout your home.

- Don't put alarms in or near kitchens or bathrooms where smoke or steam can set them off by accident.
- If it is difficult for you to fit smoke alarms yourself contact your local fire and rescue service for help. They'll be happy to install them for you.

Looking after your smoke alarms

- Make testing your smoke alarms part of your regular household routine.
- Test them by pressing the button until the alarm sounds. If it doesn't sound, you need to replace the battery.
- If a smoke alarm starts to beep on a regular basis, you need to replace the battery immediately.
- If it is a ten year alarm, you will need to replace the whole alarm every ten years.



Other equipment you could consider

- Fire blankets are used to put out a fire or wrap a person whose clothes are on fire. They are best kept in the kitchen.
- Fire extinguishers shoot out a jet to help control a fire. They are quick and simple to use, but always read the instructions first.
- Heat alarms can detect fires in kitchens where smoke alarms should not be placed.

How to prevent common fires: In the kitchen

Cook safely

Take extra care if you need to leave the kitchen whilst cooking, take pans off the heat or turn them down to avoid risk.

- Avoid cooking when under the influence of alcohol.
- Avoid leaving children in the kitchen alone when cooking on the hob. Keep matches and sauce pan handles out of their reach to keep them safe.
- Make sure saucepan handles don't stick out - so they don't get knocked off the stove.
- Take care if you're wearing loose clothing - they can easily catch fire.

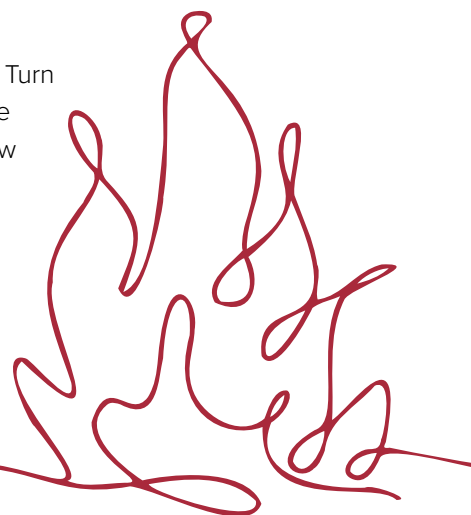
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob.
- Spark devices are safer than matches or lighters to light gas cookers, because they don't have a naked flame.
- Double check the cooker is off when you've finished cooking.
- Keep electrics (leads and appliances) away from water.
- Check toasters are clean and placed away from curtains and kitchen rolls.
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean and in good working order. A build up of fat and grease can ignite a fire.

Deep fat frying

- Take care when cooking with hot oil - it sets alight easily.
- Make sure food is dry before putting it in hot oil so it doesn't splash.
- If the oil starts to smoke - it's too hot. Turn off the heat and leave it to cool.
- Use a thermostat controlled electric deep fat fryer. They can't overheat.

What to do if a pan catches fire

- Don't take any risks. Turn off the heat if it's safe to do so. Never throw water over it.
- Don't tackle the fire yourself.



Electrics

How to avoid electrical fires

- Always check that you use the right fuse to prevent overheating.
- Make sure an electrical appliance has a British or European safety mark when you buy it.
- Certain appliances, such as washing machines, should have a single plug to themselves, as they are high powered.
- Try and keep to one plug per socket.
- When charging electrical goods, follow the manufacturer's instructions and look for the CE mark that indicates chargers comply with European safety standards.
- Keep your eyes peeled for signs of dangerous or loose wiring such as scorch marks, hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that trip for no obvious reasons, or flickering lights.
- Check and replace any old cables and leads, especially if they are hidden from view - behind furniture or under carpets and mats.
- Unplugging appliances helps reduce the risk of fire.
- Unplug appliances when you're not using them or when you go to bed.

Furniture

- Always ensure that your furniture has the fire-resistant permanent label.

Portable heaters

- Try to secure heaters up against a wall to stop them falling over.
 - Keep them clear from curtains and furniture and never use them for drying clothes.



Using an electric blanket

- Store electric blankets flat, rolled up or loosely folded to prevent damaging the internal wiring.
- Unplug blankets before you get into bed, unless it has a thermostat control for safe all-night use.
- Try not to buy second hand blankets and check regularly for wear and tear.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. An extension lead or adaptor will have a limit to how many amps it can take, so be careful not to overload them to reduce the risk of a fire.



Appliances use different amounts of power - a television may use a 3amp plug and a vacuum cleaner a 5amp plug for example.

Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order to prevent them triggering a fire.



Cigarettes

Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully. Put them out. Right out!

- Never smoke in bed.
- Use a proper ashtray - never a wastepaper basket.
- Make sure your ashtray can't tip over and is made of a material that won't burn.
- Don't leave a lit cigarette, cigar or pipe lying around. They can easily fall over and start a fire.
- Take extra care if you smoke when you're tired, taking prescription drugs, or if you've been drinking. You might fall asleep and set your bed or sofa on fire.
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Consider buying child resistant lighters and match boxes.

Candles

Make sure candles are secured in a proper holder and away from materials that may catch fire - such as curtains.

- Put candles out when you leave the room, and make sure they're put out completely at night.
- Children shouldn't be left alone with lit candles.
- Keep pets away from lit candles.

Plan a Safe Escape

Fitting smoke alarms is the first crucial step to protecting yourself from fire. But what would you do if one went off during the night?

- Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows how to escape.
- Make sure exits are kept clear.
- The best route is the normal way in and out of your home.
Think of a second route in case the first one is blocked.
- Take a few minutes to practise your escape plan.
- Review your plan if the layout of your home changes.

Top Tip: Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them



What to do if there is a fire

Don't tackle fires yourself. Leave it to the professionals.

- Keep calm and act quickly, get everyone out as soon as possible.
- Don't waste time investigating what's happened or rescuing valuables.
- If there's smoke, keep low where the air is clearer.
- Before you open a door check if it's warm. If it is, don't open it - fire is on the other side.
- Call 999 as soon as you're clear of the building.



What to do if your escape is blocked

If you can't get out, get everyone into one room, ideally with a window and a phone.

Put bedding around the bottom of the door to block out the smoke.

- Call 999 then open the window and shout "HELP FIRE".
- If you're on the ground or first floor, you may be able to escape through a window.
- Use bedding to cushion your fall and lower yourself down carefully. Don't jump.
- If you can't open the window break the glass in the bottom corner. Make jagged edges safe with a towel or blanket.

What to do if your clothes catch fire

- Don't run around, you'll make the flames worse.
- Lie down and roll around. It makes it harder for the fire to spread.
- Smother the flames with a heavy material, like a coat or blanket.
- Remember, Stop, Drop and Roll!

How to escape from a high level building

- As with all buildings, you should plan and practise an escape route.
- Avoid using lifts and balconies if there is a fire.
- It is easy to get confused in smoke, so count how many doors you need to go through to reach the stairs.
- Check there is nothing in the corridors or stairways that could catch fire - like boxes or rubbish.
- Make sure doors to stairways are not locked.

In the event of a fire, get out, stay out and call 999.

- Make sure everyone in the building knows where the fire alarms are.
- You should still get a smoke alarm for your own home, even if there is a warning system in the block.

Top tip: Make a bedtime check. You are more at risk from a fire when asleep. So it's a good idea to check your home before you go to bed.

Remember!

- Close inside doors at night to stop a fire from spreading.
- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on like your freezer.
- Check your cooker is turned off.
- Don't leave the washing machine on.
- Turn heaters off and put up fireguards.
- Put candles and cigarettes out properly.
- Make sure exits are kept clear.
- Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them.

Top tip: Close inside doors at night.

For more information please visit <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/housing/your-home/your-property/> We can arrange a fire safety survey of your home.



