



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Fire and Fire Door Safety



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What are the main causes of fires in the home?

Most fires start within an individual property. There are lots of things that can cause a fire but some of the most common are:

- Electrical faults including overloaded sockets, damaged cables.
- Cigarettes when they're not put out properly, or when someone smoking out of a window throws the butt away and it falls through a neighbour's open window below.
- Chip and frying pans.
- Candles when they're left unattended.
- Lithium batteries (found in items such as e-scooters and e-bikes).
- Items left on charge unattended (laptops, mobile phones).
- Unattended fire pits, barbeques, and bonfires in the garden.
- Unattended gas or electric heaters.
- Damaged electric blankets.

Fire safety in your home

The best protection from fire is prevention, here's some top tips for fire safety in your home:

- Ensure your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are working by testing them each week. Smoke alarms will alert everyone to a fire, especially when they are asleep.
- Always switch off and unplug appliances and electrical devices when not in use.
- Don't leave appliances such as tumble dryers running when you are out of the house.
- Make sure devices are charged safely - Never leave mobile phones or laptops on charge under pillows or blankets.
- Check for damaged electrical cables or plugs.
- Make sure plug sockets and extension leads/adaptors are not overloaded.
- Check that your electrical appliances have not been recalled by the manufacturer due to safety issues at <https://productrecall.campaign.gov.uk>.
- Keep landings, stairs and hallways clear of clutter and trip hazards so you can easily escape in the event of a fire.
- If you live in a flat, remember, most fires in blocks of flats start within the flats themselves, not in the communal areas, so it's important to check the doors in your flat are in good condition and that they shut properly. Never remove internal doors or wedge them open; make sure they are closed at night.
- Make sure you have an escape plan that everyone knows.
- Make sure you know where the keys are kept for any of the main doors.
- If you live in a flat with communal areas make sure you familiarise yourself with the Fire Plan which is in the communal hallway, so you know the layout of the building, the fire exits and where your evacuation assembly point is.

You can arrange a free Home Fire Safety Visit or complete a Home Fire Safety Visit Form through County Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Service (CDDFRS) by calling **0345 2234221** (Mon - Fri 8.30 - 4.30) or online at <https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/free-home-fire-safety-visit>.

You can also find more information on fire safety in our Fire Safety in the Home leaflet in your sign-up pack or at <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/18629/fire-safety-in-the-home.pdf>.

Or you can access the CDDFRS website for lots more information including easy to read and a number of other language versions at <https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/fire-safety-advice-leaflets>.



Fire safety in communal areas

As your landlord, we have a legal duty to arrange for a fire risk assessment to be carried out on the communal areas of our buildings, and for it to be kept under review - but there are a few things you can do to help:

- Don't obstruct the communal areas, which often form the fire escape route for the block.
- Don't prop open fire doors in communal areas.
- Don't clutter the stairs, corridors and landings with personal items or things that can catch fire easily or trip people up such as artificial flowers, nets, plant pots and door mats.
- Don't store prams, bicycles, or mobility scooters in communal areas without our permission. You won't get permission if the fire safety of the block is put at risk.
- If you see anything in the communal areas that doesn't belong there, remove it, or tell us and we will arrange removal.
- Don't store flammable materials in any communal cupboards.
- Make sure you put all rubbish in the bins provided - don't leave it lying around in the refuse area, as this can easily be set on fire.

What is a fire door?

A fire door ensures that should a fire break out, it can be contained in a 'compartment'. This keeps the fire and smoke trapped for a defined period, allowing time for you to get out and make the fire easier to tackle.

They are designed to automatically close behind you in the event of fire, holding flames back and stopping the spread of the fire and toxic smoke into escape routes, corridors, and other flats in the block.

Fire doors are a legal requirement for flats which open onto communal areas shared with other tenants. This is to make sure crucial escape routes are protected if a fire breaks out.

The door will have a self-closing device attached to it and either the door edge or the door frame will have strips which swell up when heated, sealing any small gaps in the event of a fire. They may also have cold smoke seals (which look like small brushes) to provide extra smoke protection.

Why are fire doors important?

It is important that fire doors and their self-closers work properly because they offer protection by limiting the spread of smoke and fire into shared or communal areas and escape routes. But the door seals and self-closing devices only work effectively if you fully close the door, every time you use it.

If your flat's fire door does not fully shut every time you use it, or you are having problems with the self-closer device, you must let us know immediately. We will come and adjust your door to make sure it closes properly.



Easy fire door checks that you can do

All fire doors/self-closing devices should be regularly checked and maintained to ensure that they are operating correctly. You can help us to ensure your safety and that of your neighbours by:

- Checking that the door to your flat fully closes securely every time.
- Letting us know if any part of your door, door frame or self-closing device gets damaged.
- Letting us know if any of the fire/smoke seals or brushes are missing or loose.
- Letting us know if your door does not fully close every time. We will adjust the door or self-closing device.
- Letting us know if any of the smoke seals or brushes are missing or loose on your letterbox.
- Letting us know if any fire doors in the corridors of your block are not working properly (e.g. broken door closure, door not fully shutting, damaged door frame/broken glass)

You Must Not

- Remove any 'smoke seals' or 'smoke brushes' that are part of the door or the door frame.
- Remove or disconnect any self-closing device that is attached to the door.
- Make any alterations to any fire door or frame, that can reduce its fire resistance. This includes painting the door or frame.
- Drill any holes in the flat door to fit any door furniture, such as a safety chain, door bells or cameras.
- Prop or wedge open any fire door.



What should I do if there is a fire?

- Call **999** as soon as you're out of the building.
- Keep calm and act quickly, if it safe to do so leave your home as quickly as possible.
- If there is a "stay-put" policy in place or its unsafe for you to leave your home remain in your home, keep your front door shut, but be ready to leave when instructed.
- Don't waste time investigating what's happened or collecting valuables when leaving.
- If there's smoke, stay low where the air is clearer.
- Before you open a door, check if it is warm, if it is don't open it - fire is likely to be on the other side.
- Head to your buildings evacuation assembly spot (this is advised on your building Fire Plan) so Fire and Rescue Services know where to look for people.
- Report any damage to us on **01325 405333**.

How do I contact you?

You can find out more information in our Fire Safety at Home leaflet and you can contact us for more information or to report any issues by:

- Accessing your Darlington Home Online account.
- Emailing us at **housing@darlington.gov.uk**.
- Phoning us on **01325 405333**.