
Fire safety

for parents and child carers



PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM FIRE

Fire safety for parents and child carers

You know how much your children mean to you. You would do anything to keep them safe.

Yet every year children are injured and killed in fires.

Don't ignore the dangers!

Real life – **Planning can save lives.**



On 21 August 1999 there was a fire in the home of the Johnson family.

In thick smoke, the parents went looking for their three children, Tod (age three), Ben (age four) and Lisa (age six), but they weren't in their beds.

The parents searched frantically before escaping the house.

The children never emerged. They were found holding hands in a wardrobe. They had all been killed by smoke inhalation.



Make sure everyone knows the risks and what to do if a fire starts.

SMOKE ALARMS

Keep your family safe from fire by fitting a smoke alarm where you live.

A smoke alarm is a warning device that detects smoke at the earliest stages of a fire. This gives you vital extra time to escape.

- Smoke alarms cost from as little as £5 and you can get them from supermarkets and in high-street stores.

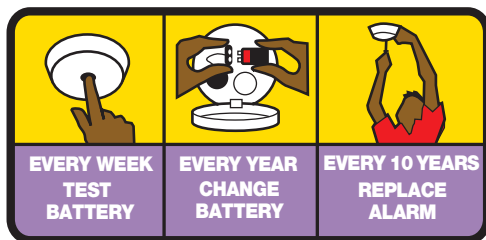


- Fit at least one for each floor of your home, ideally on the hallway or landing ceilings.
- Don't put a smoke alarm in the kitchen where it can be set off accidentally. You can buy smoke alarms fitted with a 'hush button' so you can silence the alarm if it goes off by mistake.

- Make sure children know what to do if they hear the smoke alarm – read 'Be prepared' which is located towards the end of this leaflet.



- Always test the batteries once a week. Change the battery every year if it is not the 'long life' type. Alarms are also available with 10-year batteries.



It's vital to maintain your smoke alarms.

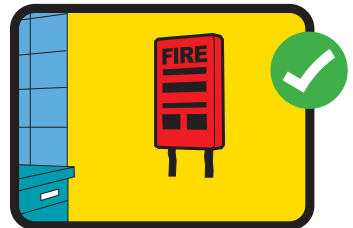
KITCHEN SAFETY

- Never allow young children to switch on the cooker or touch saucepans.
- Don't allow children to put anything on top of the cooker even when it is off.
- Keep electrical leads and items which can catch fire easily, such as tea towels, oven gloves and loose clothing, away from the cooker and toaster.
- Keep the oven, toaster, hob and grill clean. A build-up of crumbs, fat and grease can easily catch fire.



-
- Keep electrical leads and appliances away from water.

-
- Why not keep a fire blanket in the kitchen? You can use it to wrap around someone whose clothes have caught fire or to smother a small fire. Ask your local Fire and Rescue Service (fire station) about the best one to buy.



Don't leave cooking unattended.
Fire starts when your attention stops.



Remember – never leave children unattended at home.

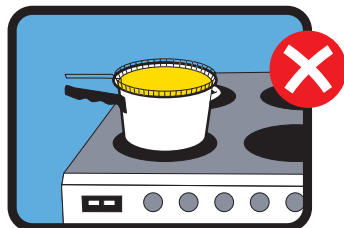
A fire can start in moments.

- Supervise children in the cooking area at all times.



-
- If you deep-fry food, dry it before you put it in the hot oil. If the oil starts to smoke, turn off the heat and leave the pan to cool.

- Never fill chip pans more than one-third full of oil.
- Make sure saucepan handles don't stick out from the hob.



-
- Don't use matches or lighters to light gas cookers. Spark devices are safer.
-

What if a pan catches fire?

Don't take risks. Get everyone out of your home and call the Fire and Rescue Service.

- Turn off the heat if it's safe to do so. Don't move the pan.
-

- Never throw water over the pan.



**IF THERE'S A FIRE... Get Out
Stay Out
and Call
999**



Don't take risks

There is no such thing as a safe fire. It's better for you to prevent fire than to fight it.

Tackling fire is a job best left to professional firefighters.

ELECTRICS

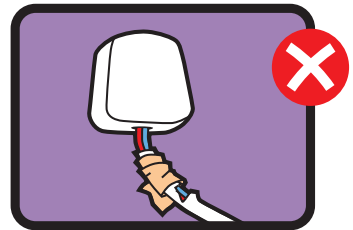
Plugs and cables

- Tell children not to pull on electrical cables or play with electrical appliances or sockets.
- Put plug guards into sockets so children can't stick things into the holes.
- Don't put cables under carpets or mats or where children can trip over them.



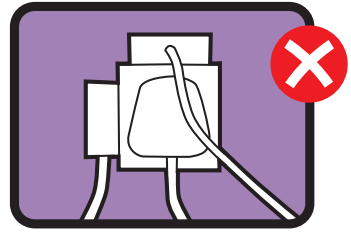
Turn off and unplug electrical appliances not in use, unless they are designed to be left on (for example, freezers and video recorders).

- Replace any worn or taped-up cables and leads. Check for signs of loose wiring and faulty plugs or sockets, such as scorch marks or flickering lights.

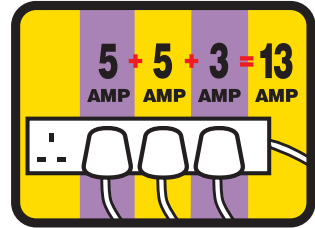


- Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order, and have them serviced regularly. This is especially important for washing machines and tumble dryers that may be left on overnight.
- Never buy an electrical appliance without knowing it is safe to use. New appliances should have the British or European safety mark on it. If the appliance is second-hand, always have it checked by a qualified electrician before you use it.

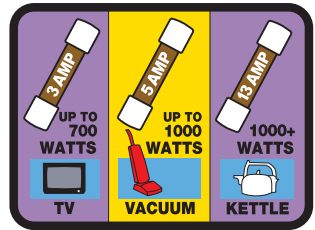
- Don't overload sockets – use one plug in each socket.



- If you have to use an adaptor, use one which has a fuse and keep the total output to no more than 13 amps. Watch out! A single kettle uses 13 amps alone.

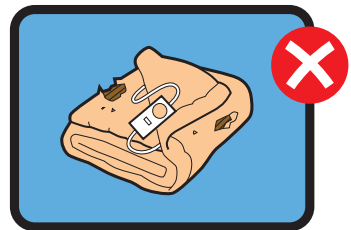


- Check the maximum amps that the fuse in the plug can handle.



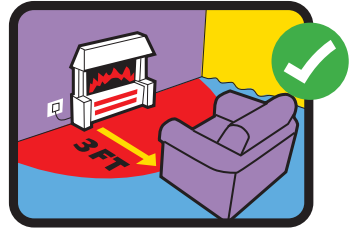
Electric blankets

- Don't leave blankets folded. Store them flat or rolled up to protect the internal wiring.
- Only leave a blanket switched on all night if it has thermostatic controls for safe all-night use. Otherwise, unplug it before you get into bed.
- Replace electric blankets every 10 years. Never buy second-hand blankets and look out for the British or European safety mark.



Portable heaters

- Don't let children play near a fire or heater.
- Don't place heaters closer than one metre (three feet) away from curtains or furnishings and never use them for drying clothes.
- Tell children not to play with, or leave toys near a fire or heater.
- Teach children never to put anything on top of a heater.
- Fit a childproof fire guard in front of an open fire or heater if there are children in the house.
- Always position heaters so they are backed up against a wall, facing into the room. If possible, secure them to the wall to stop them falling over.



Lights

- Don't position lights and bulbs near curtains and other fabrics.
- Teach children never to put anything on top of a light.

Furniture



Check your furniture has the permanent fire-resistant label.



CIGARETTES

- Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.
- Fit childproof locks on cupboards that have anything in them that children could use to start a fire.
- Tell children never to touch matches or lighters. Teach them to tell a grown-up if they find them.



Real life – **A couple of minutes out of the room**



Julie Bacon left her three-year-old son Dylan in the living room while she went to get a cup of coffee.

When she came back, she was horrified to see a newspaper burning on the sofa and Dylan standing smiling beside it.

Julie managed to put out the fire, but she was badly shaken and the sofa had to be replaced. It seems Dylan had climbed up on a box and reached a box of matches that were on the mantelpiece.

“I’m so aware of fire risks now,” says Julie. “I make sure Dylan can’t get access to any fire-lighting materials like matches or lighters.”

If you or anyone who visits your home smokes, then make sure you know the risks.

- Take extra care smoking if you're drowsy, taking prescription drugs or if you have been drinking. It's too easy to fall asleep and not notice that a cigarette is still burning.
- Don't smoke in bed. It's too easy to fall asleep and set the bed on fire.



Cigarettes are hotter than you think
– they can burn at temperatures of over 700°C.

- Always use proper ashtrays.
- Make sure when you put out a cigarette, it is really out.



Every three days someone dies from a fire caused by a cigarette.

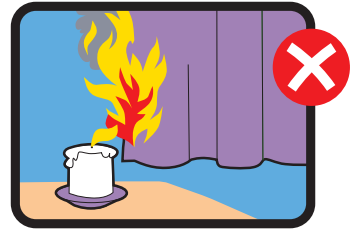
CANDLES

Treat lighted candles as you would any other flame.

- Teach children never to play with lighted candles.
- Position lighted candles out of the reach of children.
- Don't leave candles unattended.
- Put them out completely at night.



-
- Keep candles away from anything that can catch fire, for example furnishings, fabrics and curtains.



-
- Candles and tea lights can melt plastic surfaces like the tops of televisions and bathtubs. Make sure you always place them on a heat-resistant surface.



It only takes a moment's distraction for a fire to start!

BE PREPARED – plan ahead

Spend a few minutes thinking about how you'd get out in a fire. What would you do if your main escape route was blocked? Would everyone know what to do? Make sure everyone in your home, including children, know the basic procedure for surviving a fire.

- If other people are looking after the children – make sure babysitters or childminders know about the escape plan and what to do.

It might be an idea to pin up the basic plan on the wall, especially if people often drop in or come to stay. Make sure children know the best escape route and practise it with them.



- You need to be able to find the door or window keys in a hurry. Agree with everyone you live with where they are going to be kept, and keep them there.



- Keep your escape route clear – make sure children keep them free of toys and other obstructions.
- The best escape route is your normal way in and out of your home.
- Choose a second escape route, in case the first one is blocked by fire. Practise using this escape route with children. Keep both routes clear of obstructions.
- Plan where to meet up outside in case you get separated.

What to do if a fire starts

It is important to talk through with children what to do if there is a fire. At the time of a fire it may not be possible for an adult to help them. Learn what to do yourself and then teach children who live or visit your home to do the same in a fire.

- If you see smoke or flames, or if you hear the smoke alarm sound, shout to tell everyone in your home that there is a fire.
- If there is smoke, keep low where the air is cleaner.
- Try and keep calm. Get everyone out as quickly as possible – don't waste time investigating or rescuing valuables. Make sure children know to 'get out', and 'stay out'.



If your clothes catch fire...

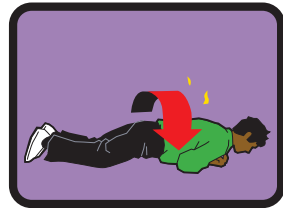
- Don't run around. Lie down and roll around.
- Smother the flames with a heavy material, like a coat, blanket or a fire blanket if there is one near.
- Make teaching fire safety fun by playing a game with young children so they can practise the 'stop, drop and roll' technique in a safe environment.



STOP!



DROP!



ROLL!

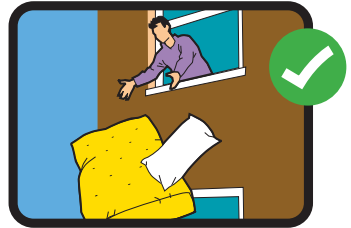
If escape routes are blocked...

- If you can't get out, get everyone into one room, preferably with a window which opens and a phone. Put bedding round the door to block smoke. Call 999 and alert neighbours or passers by if you can from the window. Plan which room you might use and tell children how to choose a 'safe room'. They should also know how to attract help.



As an adult, in the event of needing to escape from a window, follow the advice below:

- If you can't open the window – break the glass in the bottom corner. Make jagged edges safe with a towel or blanket.
- If you're on the ground or first floor, go out of a window. Use bedding to cushion your fall and lower yourself. Don't jump!



- Call 999 as soon as you are clear of the building.



Don't go back inside for any reason.

Make sure children know that pets can save themselves and are not a reason to go back inside.

YOUR EMERGENCY CALL

Teach children how to make an emergency call but make sure they know that 999 is the number you dial only in an emergency.



Hoax calls may seem exciting for children, but they put lives at risk. Make sure children know it is wrong.

These calls are free. Don't call the local fire station's number – it may take longer.

Speak slowly and clearly. Give the whole address, including the town and postcode.

Make sure children know their home address. Pin it by the phone.

Explain if anyone is trapped and what room they are in.

SAFETY RULES FOR CHILDREN

Teaching children the following basic rules of fire safety is a lifelong investment.

- Never play with matches or lighters.
- If you see matches or lighters lying around, tell a grown-up.
- Never play with a lighted candle.
- Don't play close to a fire or heater, or leave toys near a fire or heater.
- Don't pull on electric cables or fiddle with electrical appliances or sockets.
- Never switch on the cooker.
- Never put anything on top of the cooker or touch any saucepans.
- Don't put things on top of heaters or lights.

Home check

You can prevent most fires in your home. Use the home check list below to think about fire safety where you are living. Keep it handy as a reminder of the basics. It may seem like common sense, but it could save your life. The person renting the property is normally legally responsible for it. It is your life, so make sure your living space is safe from the risk of fire.



***The basics – don't wait until later!
If you do spot a problem, put it right now.***

Smoke alarms

A smoke alarm has been fitted on every floor.

Smoke-alarm batteries have been tested in the last week.

Smoke-alarm batteries have been replaced in the last year.

Electrics

There is no more than one plug in each wall socket.

If an adaptor is used, appliances running off it use no more than 13 amps in total.

Fuses are the correct rating for each appliance.

There are no loose or taped-up cables and leads.

There are no plugs or sockets with scorch marks.





Kitchen essentials

The cooker, toaster and grill pans are clean.

Electrical leads or flammable materials, such as tea towels or cloths, are away from the cooker and toaster.

General risks

Lights are not near curtains or other materials that can catch fire easily.

Any matches or lighters are out of children's reach and sight.

All upholstered furniture in the property has a fire-resistant label.



Last thing at night

You are far more likely to be killed or injured in a fire during the night so get used to checking your home is safe before you go to bed.

- Switch off and unplug electrical appliances you are not using unless they are designed to stay on, such as the freezer or video recorder for example.
- Check the cooker is turned off.
- Don't leave the washing machine on.
- Turn heaters off and put up fire guards.
- Put out candles and cigarettes properly.
- Close inside doors as they would slow the spread of a fire.

Regular checks and maintenance

Every week: - test your smoke-alarm battery.

Every year: - change your smoke-alarm battery;
- service your boiler; and
- service any major electrical appliances.

Every 10 years: - replace your smoke alarm.

FURTHER HELP AND ADVICE

Below are some further resources and contact details for you to find out more for yourself, or on behalf of a young person.

A comprehensive guide to fire safety

<http://www.firekills.gov.uk>

Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT)

<http://www.capt.org.uk>

Arson Prevention Bureau

<http://www.arsonpreventionbureau.org.uk>

Children's Fire and Burns Trust

<http://www.childrensfireandburntrust.org.uk>

The following are some websites that can help children learn more about fire.

Welephant's website

<http://www.welephant.co.uk>

A site from the National Fire Safety Charity for Children with stories, activities and safety advice.

Fire Service.co.uk children's pages

<http://www.fireservice.co.uk/children.php>

Part of a website created by fire fighters in the Manchester area, with fire-related games for young children.



GET SMART!

Information that could save your life.

GET EQUIPPED!

Investing in your own safety.

GET OUT!

Make a plan. Be prepared.

This is one of a series of leaflets in the 'Get Smart! Get Equipped! Get Out!' fire safety range available from your local Fire and Rescue Service. Other leaflets in the series provide advice on fire safety equipment, fire safety for parents and children, and extra information for those with eyesight problems or problems getting around.

Translations and alternative formats are also available.

Published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
©Crown copyright 2006. Printed in the UK, January 2006,
on material containing 75% post-consumer waste
and 25% ECF pulp (03DOCF01123)

Product code: Fire parents 04



For further information visit our website at: www.firekills.gov.uk