

The Fire Prevention Handbook

Essential fire safety information for your home





Fire safety in the home

This handbook's practical and clear-cut advice will help you greatly reduce the chances of a fire happening in your home. If you have a fire, it explains how to get everyone out quickly and safely.





Introduction



A fire can start very easily and can spread with frightening speed. Every year there are more than 68,000 fires in people's homes, resulting in 400 deaths and 13,800 injuries.

This handbook is your essential DIY guide to fire safety. If you follow the sensible advice and suggestions in it, you will significantly reduce the chance of there being a fire in your home. And if there ever is a fire, you'll know how to get everyone out safely.

A lot of the advice is common sense and will only take a few minutes of your time to put into action. With this guide there is a separate room-by-room checklist which will:

- help you to identify any potential danger in your home that could cause a fire; and
- refer you to the relevant page in this guide for advice on how to reduce the risk.

If you have any questions which aren't answered in this guide, contact your local Fire and Rescue Service (fire station) for advice (you'll find the phone number in the Phone Book) or visit www.firekills.gov.uk There is also a list of useful contacts on page 63.



Remember if you do have a fire – however small – get everyone out of the building and dial 999 for the Fire and Rescue Service.



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This section explains how you can reduce the chances of having a fire in your home by taking common-sense precautions. Use the checklist at the front of this guide and inspect every room in your home for possible dangers.





Prevention

Safety in the kitchen

Most fires in homes start in the kitchen as a result of people being careless with appliances or being distracted for a moment while cooking. Nearly 20 people a day are killed or injured in kitchen fires.

Cooking

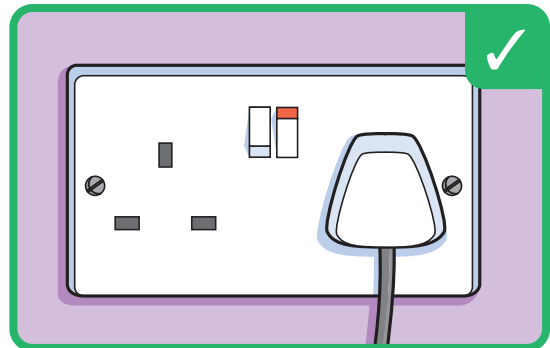
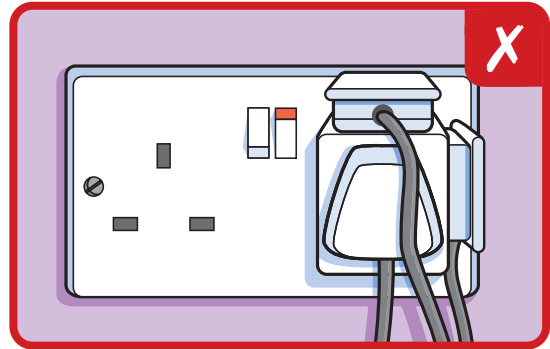
- When cooking, take care if you're wearing loose clothing as it can easily catch fire. Keep electrical leads, tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob.
- Never leave children alone in the kitchen. Keep matches, lighters and saucepan handles where children can't reach them, and fit a safety catch on the oven door.
- Keep the oven, hob, toaster and grill clean – a build-up of fat, crumbs or grease can easily catch fire.
- Don't use matches or lighters to light gas cookers – spark devices, which you can buy from hardware stores, are safer.
- Don't leave pans on the hob when you're not around. Take them off the heat if you have to leave the kitchen.
- Angle saucepan handles so they don't stick out from the hob, or over a naked flame.
- Don't put anything that is made of metal or is metallic inside the microwave.
- When you have finished cooking, make sure you switch off the oven and hob.



Prevention

Looking after the electrics

- Keep electrical leads and appliances away from water.
- Turn off electrical appliances when they're not being used and service them regularly.
- Check that the toaster is clean, and empty the crumbs regularly. Make sure it's not near curtains, blinds and kitchen rolls.
- Don't overload electrical sockets. Only have one plug in each socket. If you need more plugs than there are sockets, use a 'bar type' fuse adaptor and keep the total amps of all plugs in the adaptor to 13 amps or less. Also, remember that higher-amp appliances such as washing machines always need a socket to themselves.





Prevention

Deep-frying food

- If you regularly deep-fry food, consider buying an electric deep-fat fryer. They have thermostats fitted so they can't overheat and are safer to use.
- Dry food before putting it into hot oil, to prevent the oil from splashing and burning you.
- If you don't have an electric deep-fat fryer and are using an ordinary pan, never fill it more than one-third full.
- If the oil starts to smoke, it's too hot. Turn the heat off and leave it to cool.



Nearly 20 people a day are killed or injured in kitchen fires.



Prevention

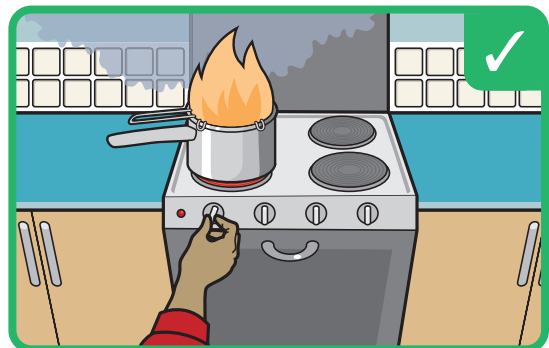
What to do if a pan catches fire

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

- Don't move the pan and **never** throw water over it.
- Turn off the heat under the pan (if it's safe to do so) and allow it to cool completely.

Treating minor burns

If a burn is bigger than a postage stamp, you should get medical advice from your doctor or call an ambulance. If a burn is smaller than a postage stamp, run cold water over it until the pain reduces and then cover the burn with clean, non-fluffy material.





Prevention

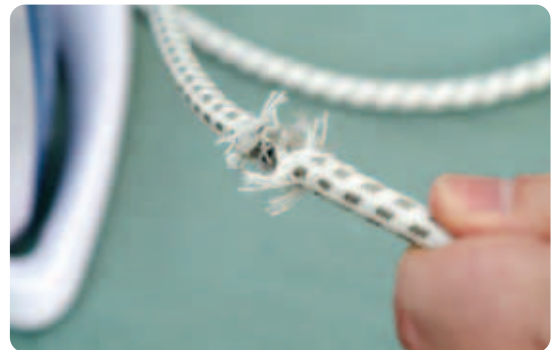
Using electrics and appliances

Plugs and cables

- Unplug electrical appliances when you're not using them.
- Don't overload sockets – use one plug in each socket.
- Don't put cables under carpets or mats.
- Make sure that the plug has the correct fuse for the appliance.
- If you have to use an adaptor, use a 'bar type' one with a fuse and keep the total output of all plugs in the adaptor to no more than 13 amps. A kettle alone uses 13 amps.
- Check for signs of loose wiring and faulty plugs or sockets (such as scorch marks or flickering lights), and have any problems you find fixed.
- Replace any worn or taped-up cables and leads.

Electric blankets

- Don't fold electric blankets. Protect the wiring inside them by storing them flat or rolled up.
- Don't leave an electric blanket switched on all night, unless it is thermostatically controlled so it can be used all night.
- Electric blankets should carry the British Standard Kitemark and the British Electrotechnical Approvals Board (BEAB) symbol on them.

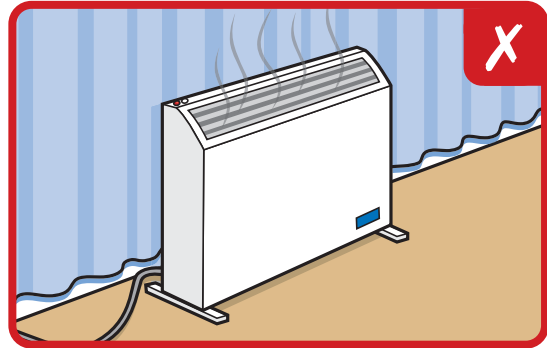




Prevention

Portable heaters

- Always position heaters so the back is against a wall and they're facing the room. If possible, secure them to the wall to prevent them from falling over.
- Don't place heaters near curtains or furnishings, and never use them for drying clothes.
- Switch heaters off if you're not in the room, and also when you go to bed.



Lights

- As light bulbs get hot, don't place them near curtains and other fabrics.

Furniture

- Check that your furniture has the permanent fire-resistant label.

Gas appliances

Every year about 30 people die from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues which have not been properly installed or maintained. You can't see, taste or even smell carbon monoxide but it can kill you without warning in a matter of hours. You should have gas appliances safety-checked by a Confederation for the Registration of Gas Installers (CORGI) registered installer at least every 12 months.

For more information visit www.hse.gov.uk/gas or call the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Gas Safety Advice Line on 0800 300 363



Prevention

Cigarettes, cigars and pipes

More people die in fires caused by smoking than in fires resulting from any other single cause. Tobacco is designed to stay lit, which is why cigarettes can so easily start an accidental fire.

- Take extra care when you're tired, taking prescription drugs or have been drinking alcohol. It's very easy to fall asleep without realising that your cigarette is still burning.
- If you need to lie down, don't light up. You could easily doze off and set your bed or sofa on fire.
- Don't leave lit cigarettes, cigars or pipes unattended – they can easily overbalance as they burn down, land on a carpet or newspaper and start a fire. When you put it out, make sure it really is out.
- Every year children die from starting fires with cigarettes, matches and lighters which they shouldn't have. Keep these where children can't reach them.
- Where possible, buy child-resistant lighters and matchboxes.
- Use a proper, heavy ashtray which can't tip over easily and is made of a material that won't burn.
- Tap your ash into an ashtray – never a wastebasket – and don't let the ash or cigarette ends build up in the ashtray.



Every three days someone dies because of a cigarette fire.

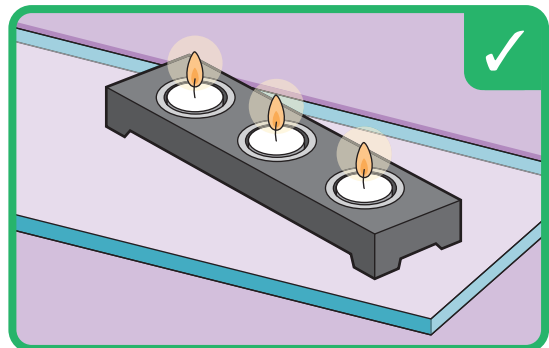


Prevention

Using candles

More than five fires a day are started by candles. A candle flame may be small, but you should treat it as you would any other flame – with care.

- Keep candles where children and pets can't reach them, away from draughts, and away from anything that can easily catch fire (for example, furniture, curtains or newspapers).
- Make sure the candle is standing up straight and is fixed firmly in a proper holder so that it can't fall over. Scented candles turn to liquid in order to release their fragrance, so always burn them in a suitable glass or metal container that can withstand the heat of the liquid and that the liquid cannot leak from.
- Always place candles on a heat-resistant surface. Night lights and tea lights can melt plastic surfaces, such as the top of a TV and the side of a bath tub.
- Don't lean across a candle – you could set your hair or clothes on fire.
- Always leave at least 10cm (4 inches) between two burning candles and never place them under shelves or other surfaces.
- Don't play with candles (for example, by putting matchsticks or anything else into the hot wax).
- Always put candles out before you move them. Using a 'snuffer' or a spoon is safer than blowing them out, which can send sparks and hot wax flying.





Prevention

Choosing fire safety equipment for your home

Smoke alarms are essential for every home, however you may feel that you need extra fire safety equipment, perhaps because you live in a remote place. The following section gives information on choosing fire safety equipment.

Fire safety equipment can be helpful in an emergency, but it is important to know how and when to use it. You should only tackle a fire in its early stage, before it starts to spread. Before tackling any fire, make sure that everyone is outside and your escape route is clear. If you're not sure what to do, don't take risks – call the Fire and Rescue Service.

Most of the equipment mentioned in this section is inexpensive and is available from supermarkets and DIY stores. Always read the manufacturer's instructions before using equipment, and only tackle small fires which are in their early stages and have not started to spread.





Prevention

Smoke alarms

You should have at least one smoke alarm in your home and preferably one on each floor level (storey). Smoke alarms are easy to fit and maintain. If they detect smoke they sound a piercing alarm to warn you of fire.

The best place for smoke alarms is where you can hear them, ideally in hallways and landings. See page 36 for more information.

Fire blankets

These are lightweight sheets of fire-resistant material which are used to cover a fire to cut off its oxygen supply or to wrap around a person whose clothes are on fire. A blanket should meet British Standard BS EN 1869.



The best place for a fire blanket is in the kitchen.

Fire extinguishers

These are pressurised cylinders containing powder, foam or carbon dioxide which shoots out in a jet. Fire extinguishers are quick and simple to use – you point them at the fire and shoot the jet at it. There are different types of extinguishers for different types of fire. Always read the instructions and make sure you have the correct extinguisher for the type of fire. If you're not sure, contact your local Fire and Rescue Service for advice.

The best place for an extinguisher is in the hall, so you can take it wherever it's needed.





Prevention

If you have extra needs

If you or a member of your household has any difficulty seeing, hearing or moving about the home, you will need to take extra care to deal with the risk of a fire. There are a number of people and organisations who can give you help and advice (see ‘Where to go for help’ on page 21). You can also get help and advice from the following sources.

- Your local Fire and Rescue Service will be able to assess how safe your home is and help to fit fire safety equipment such as smoke alarms.
- Your local citizens advice bureau or branch of Age Concern will be able to put you in touch with local voluntary groups that can also help you.
- You could also ask friends or family members for help.



You should plan how to escape if there is a fire in your home (for how to do this, see ‘Planning your escape’ on page 41). If you live in sheltered accommodation or a residential home, ask your landlord or warden to explain the safety plans for the premises and make sure you know your nearest route to safety.



Prevention

Fitting special smoke alarms

It's a good idea to fit a smoke alarm in every room (except in the kitchen and bathroom, where it can be accidentally set off by cooking fumes or steam), especially the living room and bedrooms. This will make sure that you hear the alarm wherever you are in your home. If it's difficult for you to fit a smoke alarm yourself, contact your local Fire and Rescue Service or ask a neighbour or family member to fit it for you. It's also important to test the alarm every week to make sure that it's working properly and the battery has not run out.

If you have difficulties hearing or seeing, or if you sleep deeply, there are special smoke alarms to warn you if there's a fire and to give you time to get out safely (see page 35). For example:

- Some smoke alarms have a vibrating pad or strobe lights (or both) that will wake you up when you're in bed.
- If you have a minor problem with your hearing or if you're a particularly deep sleeper it's a good idea to link two or more smoke alarms (for example, one in the hallway and one in your bedroom). Then if a fire starts downstairs it will set off both alarms, making sure that you hear it.
- If you have trouble moving around you'll need a way of getting help quickly. There are many ways of doing this, including fitting a buzzer or an intercom connected to a neighbour or warden's home. Or you could have your phone fitted with a system that automatically calls for help if a smoke alarm goes off.



Prevention

Where to go for help

The organisations listed below can give you advice on fire-safety precautions around your home.

- Your local Fire and Rescue Service
- Disabled Living Foundation
- National Federation of the Blind of the UK
- Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)
- Royal Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
- Royal Institute for Deaf People (RNID)
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
- The Residential Sprinkler Association
- Help the Aged
- Shelter
- Age Concern

Contact details for these organisations are given from page 61 onwards.



Prevention

If you rent your home

Statistics show that people who live in rented accommodation have a greater chance of having a fire.

One of the problems is that rented accommodation may not always be well maintained. Even if you think it's your landlord's responsibility to take the necessary fire safety precautions, don't leave it to them. If you can't get your landlord to make your house safe, do it yourself – it could save your life.

Landlords don't always have a legal responsibility to fit a smoke alarm, so fitting a smoke alarm in your own living area is the simplest step you can take to reduce the risk of being caught in a fire. They are inexpensive to buy, easy to install and you can take them with you when you move.

What are your landlord's obligations?

- Under the 1985 Housing Act, landlords must make sure there are adequate escape routes.
- Depending on the size of the property, they may also have to fit smoke alarms and provide fire extinguishers.



Electrical, gas and furniture safety

By law, your landlord must:

- make sure that all the gas appliances they provide are maintained in good order and that a Corgi-registered plumber carries out a safety check each year;



Prevention

- maintain all electrical installations (fixed wiring and so on) and any electrical appliances they provide (cookers, kettles and so on) and make sure they are safe to use; and
- make sure any furniture and furnishings they provide meet the fire resistance regulations.
- is the house registered with the local authority as being lived in by more than one household (that is, as being 'multiple occupation')?

Your council's Environmental Health Office will be able to give you more details about your landlord's obligations and can force your landlord to provide adequate fire precautions.

For further information on your landlord's responsibilities please visit www.odpm.gov.uk

Questions to ask your landlord

Ask your landlord the following questions:

- has the electrical wiring in the property been checked lately?
- are sockets, switches, light fittings and so on checked every year?
- is there a regular maintenance programme for gas heaters and appliances?
- are the chimneys and flues cleaned and checked regularly?

You may not be able to force your landlord to do the necessary checks but, if you have any concerns, contact your local citizens advice bureau or the Environmental Health Officer for further advice.

Student accommodation

Parents may wish to check the safety of student accommodation. If you have concerns about the standard of the accommodation you should contact the university for advice.





Prevention

Celebrating

When you're enjoying yourself with family and friends, the possibility of a fire is the last thing on your mind. But lots of guests, decorations and people smoking all add to the risk. If you know what these risks are and plan ahead, you can all have fun and peace of mind.

Parties

If you have guests staying the night, make sure they know how to escape safely.

- Keep all escape routes clear.
- Let guests know about any features they may not be familiar with (for example, how to open the front door and where the door keys are kept).
- Take particular care of elderly people, children, or people with disabilities.
- If your guests smoke, put out plenty of ashtrays and empty them regularly (so butts don't get dropped in waste-paper bins or other places where fires could start).

Religious and cultural festivals

For many people, cultural and religious festivals are an enormously important part of life, but during celebrations it's easy to get distracted and be less aware of the risk of fire.



Prevention

Decorative lights

Fairy lights, Christmas tree lights and so on don't get used often and so need more care.

- Check that the fuse in the plug is the right size (see the box for the maximum size of fuse you should use).
- Replace bulbs that blow.
- Don't leave lights on when you go to bed or leave the house.
- Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily, such as paper or fabrics.

Candles

See the 'Using candles' section on page 16.

Decorations

Decorations made of tissue paper or cardboard burn easily.

- Keep decorations and greeting cards away from heaters, lights, fireplaces and candles.



More than five fires a day are started by candles.



Prevention

Fireworks

Treat fireworks with great care – they're explosives not toys.

- Only buy fireworks marked BS 7114.
- Don't drink alcohol if you're setting off fireworks.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box.
- Follow the instructions on each firework.
- Light fireworks at arm's length, using the taper provided.
- Stand well back.
- Never go near a firework that has been lit. Even if it hasn't gone off it could still explode.
- Never put fireworks in your pocket or throw them.
- Always supervise children around fireworks.
- Light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves.



British Safety Standard 7114

- Never give sparklers to a child under five.
- Keep pets indoors.
- Don't set off noisy fireworks late at night and never after 11pm.
- Take care around open flames such as bonfires and barbecues. All clothes, even those labelled 'low flammability', can catch fire.

See www.dti.gov.uk/fireworks for more information.



Prevention

Do a bedtime safety check

You are almost three times more likely to be killed in a fire that starts during the night.

- Switch off and unplug all appliances. (Only leave on those appliances that are designed to be left on – for example, DVD players/video recorders, freezers and clock radios.)
- Check that the oven, grill and hob are switched off.
- Don't leave the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher running overnight (they are a fire risk because of their high wattage, friction and motors).
- Turn off all gas and electric heaters, and put a guard in front of an open fire.
- Check that candles are out. Never leave one burning when you go to sleep.
- Make sure that any cigarettes, cigars and pipes have been put out properly, and never smoke in bed. You could fall asleep and accidentally set fire to your bedding.
- Close all doors. By shutting doors you can keep your escape route free from fire. This is particularly important in homes where you would not be able to escape from a window, for example if you live in a high-rise flat.
- Turn off your electric blanket (unless it has a thermostat and is designed to be left on overnight).
- Check that your escape route is clear of obstacles and make sure door and window keys are in the right place.
- Before buying nightwear, visit www.dti.gov.uk for guidance on labelling. A label that reads 'low flammability' does not indicate a completely flameproof product. If any person's clothing should catch fire, follow the "stop, drop and roll" rule to put out the flames (for example see page 46).



Prevention

12 tips to protect your home

- 1** Fit smoke alarms on each level in your home. Keep them free from dust and test them once a week. Consider buying a 10-year alarm, otherwise change the batteries in your alarm every year.
- 2** Make a fire action plan so that everyone in your home knows how to escape if there's a fire.
- 3** Keep the exits from your home clear so that people can escape if there's a fire. Make sure that everyone in your home can easily find the keys for doors and windows.
- 4** Take extra care in the kitchen – accidents while cooking account for over half of fires in homes. Never leave young children alone in the kitchen.
- 5** Take extra care when cooking with hot oil. Consider buying a deep-fat fryer which is controlled by a thermostat (if you don't already have one).
- 6** Never leave lit candles in rooms that nobody is in or in rooms where children are on their own. Make sure candles are in secure holders on a surface that doesn't burn and are away from any materials that could burn.
- 7** Make sure cigarettes are stubbed out properly and are disposed of carefully, and never smoke in bed.
- 8** Get into the habit of closing doors at night. If you want to keep a child's bedroom door open, close the doors to the lounge and kitchen. This may well help save their life if there is a fire.
- 9** Don't overload electrical sockets. Remember one plug for one socket.
- 10** Keep matches and lighters where children can't see or reach them.
- 11** Take special care when you're tired or when you've been drinking.
- 12** Don't leave the TV or other electrical appliances on standby as this could cause a fire. Always switch them off and unplug when not in use.



Detection

A smoke alarm is your first line of defence – it will warn you instantly if there is a fire and give you time to escape. This section tells you all you need to know about choosing and maintaining smoke alarms.





Detection

Detecting fire

Fires happen when you least expect them, often during the night. They also spread very quickly, damaging property, injuring and killing people.

But the real killer is smoke. If you're asleep when a fire starts and you don't have a smoke alarm to wake you, you are unlikely to survive. Smoke suffocates quickly – you could be dead before the flames reach you.

Your first line of defence

If there is a fire, a smoke alarm will immediately warn you, giving you and everyone in your home time to escape to safety. Smoke alarms are cheap, available in most high-street stores, supermarkets and DIY stores, and are easy to fit and maintain.

Choosing a smoke alarm

There are a variety of models to choose from, depending on your needs and budget. This section lists the types of smoke alarm which are most commonly available. Your local Fire and Rescue Service will be happy to give you advice on which is best for your circumstances. Whichever model you choose, make sure it meets British Standard (BS) 5446 Part 1 and preferably also carries the British Standard Kitemark or PCB 'Horseshoe' mark.



Detection

The two types

There are two main types of smoke alarm – ionisation alarms and optical alarms.

- Ionisation alarms are the cheapest and the most readily available. They are very sensitive to flaming fires, (ones that burn fiercely such as chip-pan fires) and they will detect this type of fire before the smoke gets too thick.
- Optical alarms are more expensive and more effective at detecting slow-burning fires (such as smouldering foam-filled furniture and overheated wiring). Optical alarms are less likely to go off accidentally, and so are best for ground-floor hallways and for homes on one level.

As both slow-burning and flaming fires are common, for the best protection you should install one of each. However, if you can't have both it's still safer to have one smoke alarm than none at all.



On average, 270 of the 460 people killed in fires each year didn't have a smoke alarm.



Detection

The different types of model available

Standard battery alarms

An ionisation battery alarm is the cheapest and most basic smoke alarm available. An optical battery alarm is a little more expensive. Both run off 9-volt batteries which you need to test every week and replace once a year or when it beeps regularly, whichever is sooner.

Alarms with 10-year batteries

These are slightly more expensive, but you save on the cost of replacing batteries. They are available as ionisation or optical alarms and are fitted with a long-life lithium battery or a sealed power pack that lasts for 10 years.

Hush or silence button

These models are available with a 'hush' button which, when pressed, silences the alarm for a short time (for example, when cooking). If there is a real fire, giving off lots of smoke, the hush system is overridden and the warning alarm sounds. The alarm reminds you that it's been silenced by 'chirping' or by displaying a red light.





Detection

Mains-powered alarm

These alarms are powered by the home's electricity supply and need to be installed by qualified electricians. There's no battery to check, although the model is available with or without battery back-up in case of a power cut.

Battery alarm with emergency light

If the alarm goes off the emergency light alerts people with hearing difficulties.

Interconnecting or linked alarms

Some alarms connect to each other so that, when one senses smoke, all the alarms sound. This makes sure everyone hears the alarm. These alarms are useful for people with hearing difficulties, and also in larger homes.





Detection

Mains-powered alarm with strobed light and vibrating pad

These alarms are designed for people who are deaf or have hearing difficulties. If there's a fire, you'll be alerted instantly by the smoke alarm's flashing light or vibrating pad.



Mains-powered alarm which plugs into a light socket

This alarm uses a rechargeable battery which charges up when the light is switched on. It lasts for 10 years and can be silenced or tested by using the light switch.



On average, 90 of the 460 people killed in fires each year had a smoke alarm that didn't work – usually because the battery was flat or missing.



Detection

How many smoke alarms do you need?

The more alarms you have around your home, the safer you will be.

- If you live on one level, fit the alarm in the hallway between the living and sleeping areas.
- If your home has more than one level, fit one alarm at the bottom of the staircase and further alarms on each landing.

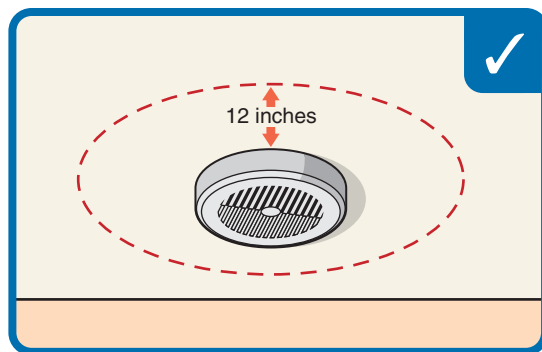
Where to fit smoke alarms

- Always put smoke alarms where you will be able to hear them throughout the home, particularly when you're asleep or when doors are closed.
- Ideal places are at the top of staircases, on stair landings, and between living and sleeping areas.
- Fit alarms on the ceiling, as near as possible to the centre of the room, hallway or landing. The alarm should be at least 30cm (12 inches) away from any wall or light.

Installing your smoke alarm

Installing a smoke alarm is easy to do and only takes a few minutes – just follow the manufacturer's instructions.

If it's difficult for you to fit a smoke alarm, ask a family member or friend to help you, or contact your local Fire and Rescue Service. Don't be tempted to have a go yourself if you feel unsteady or unsure – you could fall and injure yourself.



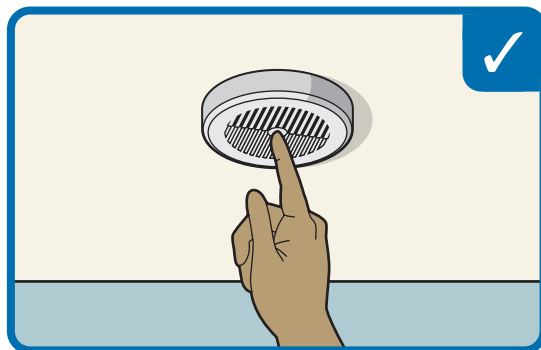


Detection

Maintaining smoke alarms

You must look after your smoke alarms. Every year people are killed in fires because their alarms failed to work because of flat or missing batteries.

- Once a week test the battery by pressing the test button until the alarm sounds. If the alarm ever starts to 'beep' regularly, replace the battery as soon as possible.
- Once a year change the battery (unless it is a 10-year alarm).
- Twice a year open the case and gently vacuum the inside to remove dust from the sensor. If it doesn't open, vacuum through the holes.
- After 10 years it's best to replace your smoke alarm with a whole new unit.



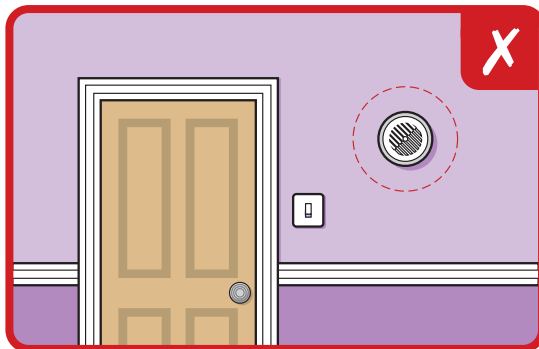
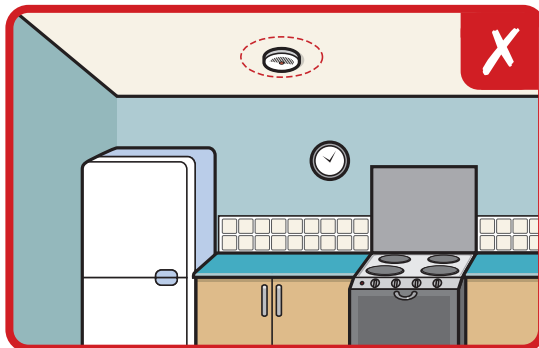


Detection

Where not to put a smoke alarm...

Don't put a smoke alarm:

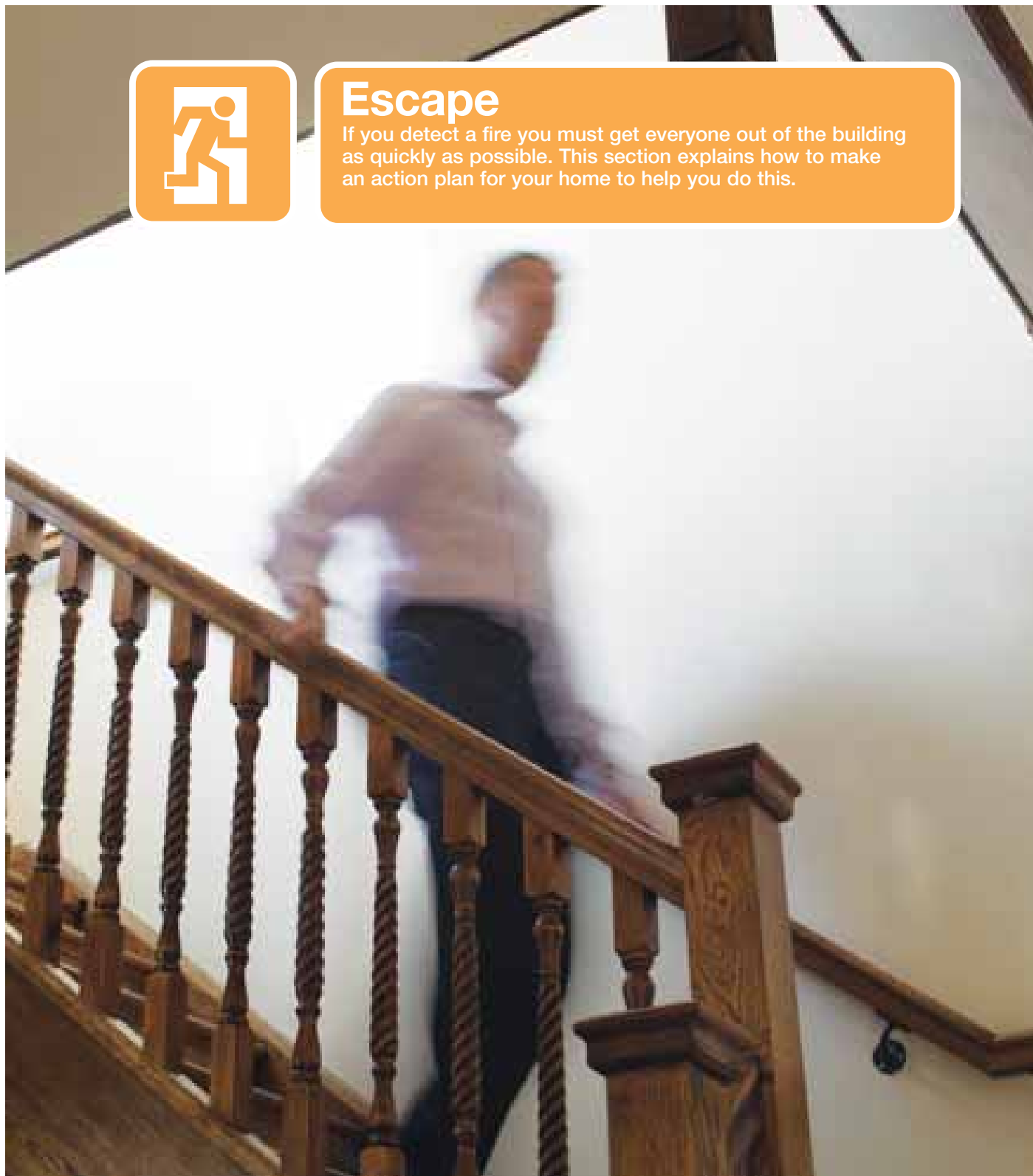
- in the kitchen or bathroom, where it could be accidentally triggered by cooking fumes or steam;
- where you can't hear it while you're asleep;
- in a garage, where it could be triggered by exhaust fumes; or
- on a wall. Smoke rises straight up towards the ceiling and will set the alarm off more quickly if the device is fixed to the ceiling – giving you more time to escape.





Escape

If you detect a fire you must get everyone out of the building as quickly as possible. This section explains how to make an action plan for your home to help you do this.





Escape

Planning your escape

Once a fire starts, it takes hold quickly and spreads even faster. A fire is frightening and it can be difficult to think straight, especially if your hall is filled with smoke and you're worried about getting you and your family out.

On average, people can survive for less than five minutes in a smoke-filled room. Preparing and practising a plan of action will help you to act quickly if there's a fire – it could even save your life. This section explains how to make an action plan for your home to make sure that everyone gets out safely.

Plan your escape together

- Discuss with everyone how you would get out if there were a fire. When making your plan, take account of everyone in the household, especially children and older or disabled people.
- Talk through your escape plan, and regularly remind people what to do – and what not to do – if there's a fire.
- Put a reminder of what to do somewhere where it's easily seen (for example, on the fridge door or the kitchen notice board).

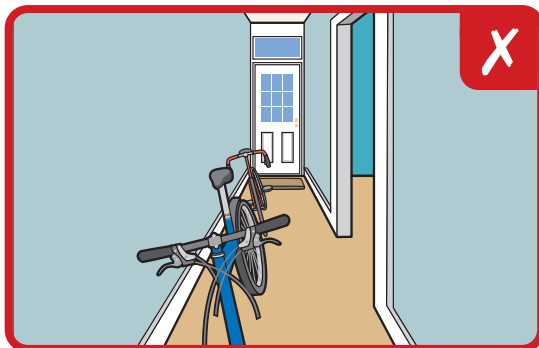




Escape

Choose an escape route

- The best escape route is usually your normal way in and out of your home. Think of any difficulties you or the other people in your household may have getting out.
- Choose a second escape route as well, in case the first one is blocked. Keep all escape routes clear.
- If there are children and older or disabled people in your household, plan how you will get them out and the best order for you all to escape.





Escape

Think about creating a safe room

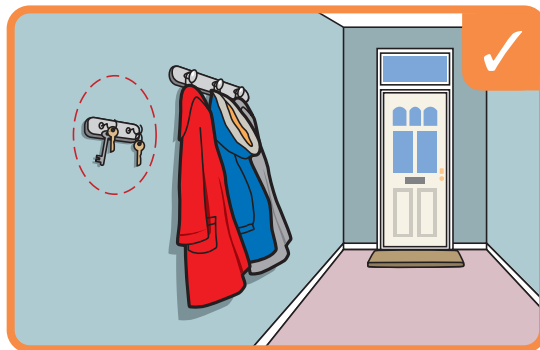
- If you can't escape you will need to find a room where you can wait for the Fire and Rescue Service. This is particularly important if you have difficulty moving around or using the stairs.
- If possible, your safe room should have a window which opens and a phone.

Make sure everyone knows where keys are kept

- Decide where the keys to doors and windows should be kept and always keep them there. Everyone in the household should know where the keys are kept.

Fire equipment

- Fire extinguishers and fire blankets should only be used on a small fire in its early stages and by adults who are absolutely sure they know how and when to use them. The first priority is to keep people safe by getting them out of the building and calling the Fire and Rescue Service.





Escape

What to do if there is a fire

Raise the alarm

If the smoke alarm goes off when you're asleep, shout to wake everyone up, get everyone together, follow your escape plan and get out of the building.

- Don't stop to investigate the fire or to collect valuables or pets.
- Use your escape route to get everyone out and meet at an agreed point.
- Close any doors which are open, and only open the doors you need to go through (this will help to stop the fire from spreading so rapidly).
- Check doors with the back of your hand. If a door is warm, don't open it – the fire is on the other side.
- If there is a lot of smoke, crawl along the floor as the air will be cleanest there.
- Once you've got everyone out of the building, use a mobile phone, a neighbour's phone or a phone box to call 999. Give the emergency operator your name and address.
- Don't go back into the building for anything. If there is still someone inside, tell the Fire and Rescue Service when they arrive – they'll be able to find the person quicker and more safely than you.
- Find somewhere safe to wait near the building, and give the Fire and Rescue Service as much information as possible about the fire and the building.



Escape

Escaping from a window

If you're on the ground floor or first floor, you may be able to escape from a window. If you have to break the window, cover the jagged glass with towels or thick bedding.

- Throw bedding out of the window to break your fall.
- Don't jump out of the window – lower yourself down to arm's length and drop to the ground.
- If you have any children, elderly or disabled people with you, plan the order you will escape in so that you can help them down.

If your escape route is blocked

- Get everyone into one room, preferably one with a window that opens and that has a phone in it. Close the door and wait to be rescued.
- Put bedding or towels along the bottom of the door to seal the gap and to prevent smoke and fumes from getting into the room.
- Open the window and stay near it for fresh air, and to let the firefighters see where you are.
- If you have a phone, call the Fire and Rescue Service. If you don't have a phone, shout for help so that someone else can phone for you.

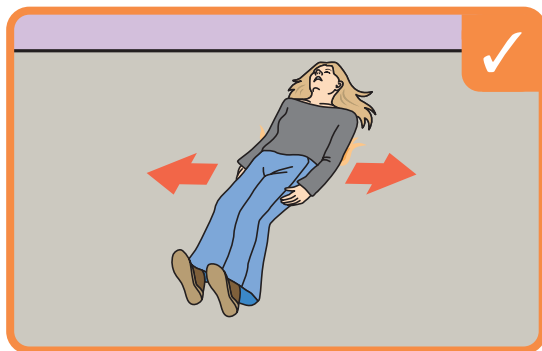




Escape

What to do if your clothes catch fire

- Don't run around – you'll fan the flames and make them burn faster.
- Lie down and roll around. This smothers the flames and makes it harder for the fire to spread.
- Smother the flames with heavy material, like a coat, a blanket or a fire blanket.





Escape

Escaping from a high-rise building

High-rise flats are built to be fireproof, and most fires won't spread further than one or two rooms. Walls, ceilings and doors will hold back flames and smoke, so if there's a fire somewhere else in the building, you're usually safest in your flat unless you're affected by heat or smoke.

Taking some time to make an escape plan will give you the confidence to know what to do if there's a fire and will give you peace of mind. If you live in a flat above the first floor, most of your safety planning is exactly the same as for ground-floor homes. However, there are some important differences.

Follow the safety advice given in the 'Prevention' and 'Detection' sections of this guide, and also the advice already given in this 'Escape' section. If you live in a flat in a high-rise building you should also take the following advice.





Escape

Making your escape plan

- Sit down with everyone who lives in your flat and talk about how you would react if there were a fire. Make sure that everyone knows where the fire alarm is.
- Choose an escape route. This should be the easiest way out. Think about how to get out of your flat, but also how to get off your floor to somewhere safe outside the building. Also decide on a second escape route, if one is available (but not a balcony).
- Make sure your escape route is kept clear. Check that there aren't any boxes, rubbish or anything that could catch fire in corridors or stairways.
- If your building has fire doors, make sure they always stay closed and are not propped open. (They are designed to stop fire and smoke from spreading.)
- Make sure that doors to stairways and fire escapes aren't locked. Regularly check that you can open these doors from both sides.
- When planning your escape route, keep in mind that you must never use the lift. A fire can cut the power to the lift, leaving you stranded.
- Choose a safe room. If you can't escape you will need to find one room where you can wait to be rescued, preferably one with a window that opens and that has a phone in it.
- Make sure everyone knows where the stairs are. As it's easy to get confused in the dark, count how many doors you will need to go through or past.





Escape

What to do if there's a fire

- Alert everyone in your flat. Don't stop for valuables or to investigate the fire.
- Before opening doors, check them with the back of your hand. If they're warm, don't open them – the fire is on the other side.
- Alert neighbouring flats by banging on the doors on your way out. Set off the fire alarm, if there is one.
- Don't use the lift.
- If there's a lot of smoke, crawl along the floor where the air will be cleanest.
- Once you are safely outside, use a mobile phone or a phone box to call 999. Give the emergency operator your name and address, including the number of your flat. Tell them what floor the fire is on, if you know this.
- If the fire is blocking your exit, or if the stairs in your block of flats are blocked by fire or smoke, stay calm and go back inside your flat and wait for the Fire and Rescue Service to arrive.





Escape

If your escape route is blocked

If the fire is inside your flat

- Get everyone into the safe room you have chosen.
- Put cushions, bedding and so on at the bottom of the door to stop smoke getting in.
- Phone 999, giving your address and the number of your flat.
- Open the window. If you feel in serious danger, wave a sheet out of the window so the firefighters know where you are.

If the fire is outside your flat

- Seal your front door with tape if you can, as well as cushions and bedding, to stop smoke getting in.
- Close any ventilators.
- Phone 999, giving your address and number of your flat.





Escape

If there's a fire – get out, stay out and call 999

How to make a 999 call

999 calls are free. Don't call your local Fire and Rescue Service's number – it could take longer to be answered.

The more information the Fire and Rescue Service has, the quicker firefighters can get to you and do their job.

Speak slowly and clearly

- Give the full address of your home, including the town.
- Say what is on fire (for example, a two-storey house or a flat in a high-rise block).
- Explain if anyone is trapped and if so, what room they are in.





Children

This section explains how to teach children to be safe with fire and what they should do if a fire starts without an adult around.





Children

It's a tragic fact that every year in the UK around 30 children are killed and more than 900 are injured in accidental house fires. This is often because there's no smoke alarm, or because no adult is there to help the children and they don't know what to do.

By taking the safety precautions described in this guide you will be helping to keep your family safe. Young children can be curious about fire and flames, so it's also important to teach them how dangerous fire can be and how quickly it can get out of hand. Don't avoid talking to your children because you don't want to frighten them. If a fire starts without an adult around, children need to know exactly what to do.

- Get them involved with making your escape plan, and practise it regularly to keep it fresh in their minds.
- Make sure babysitters or childminders know about your escape plan, including what to do if there's a fire and where the door and window keys are kept.





Children

Teaching children to be safe with fire

The best way to teach children is by example. Let your children see you being sensible and careful about cooking, candles, smoking and other potential fire risks. You should also:

- encourage your children to tell you if they find matches or lighters;
- encourage older children to be responsible by letting them take part in safe, fire-related activities (for example, lighting a bonfire or candle) under the supervision of an adult; and
- explain to older teenagers the risks of causing a fire from smoking. Even if they don't smoke, they'll probably go to parties where others do. Candles are also popular with many teenagers, so explain how to use them safely.





Children

Make your home safe for children

A child can start a fire in moments, but only if he or she has the means to do so.

- Don't leave children on their own in a room where there's a fire risk.
- Keep matches and lighters where children cannot see or reach them.
- Place candles and tea lights where children cannot reach them.
- Put a childproof fireguard in front of an open fire or heater.
- Don't let children play or leave toys near a fire or heater.
- Put child locks on cupboards containing anything that could be used to start a fire (for example, matches, candles, flammable liquids and so on).
- Keep portable heaters in a safe place where they can't be knocked over when they are being used or stored.
- Keep your escape route clear of toys and other obstructions.
- Never leave children alone in the kitchen when you're cooking, and never let them play near the oven and hob.
- Put plug guards into sockets so children can't stick anything into the holes.

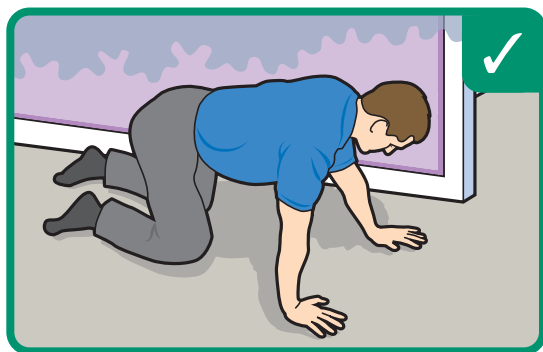




Children

Teach your children what to do if there's a fire

- If you see smoke or flames, raise the alarm and tell a grown-up straight away.
- Get out of the building as soon as possible. Go to a neighbour's house and tell them to call 999 and ask for the Fire and Rescue Service.
- If there's smoke, crawl along the floor as the air is cleanest there.
- Never hide in a cupboard or under a bed. You need to raise the alarm and get out.
- If your escape route is blocked, go into a room with a window. Put blankets and towels at the bottom of the door to stop smoke getting in. If there's a phone in the room call 999. If there isn't a phone, open the window and shout for help.
- Don't go back into the building, not even for your toys or pets. Firefighters can search the house much more quickly and safely than you can.

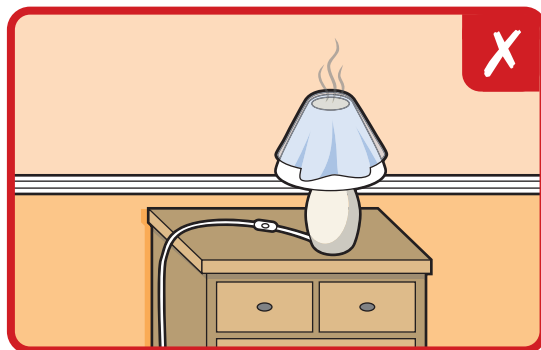




Children

Fire safety rules for children

- You can never play safely with fire – it can get out of control really fast.
- Never play with matches or lighters. If you see matches or lighters lying around, tell a grown-up.
- Never play with a lit candle.
- Don't play close to a fire or a heater, or leave your toys near a fire or heater.
- Don't pull on electric cables or fiddle with electric appliances or sockets.
- Never switch the oven or hob on.
- Don't touch any saucepans on the hob.
- Don't put anything on top of heaters, lamps or other lights.
- If you see a fire, tell a grown-up immediately and don't try to put it out.





Children

Fire fascinates children

Children can be curious about fire and flames. Some can become obsessed to the point of putting lives in danger – theirs and other people's.

Arson (deliberately starting fires) is a serious problem. If you're responsible for a child, you're legally responsible for any illegal actions carried out by that child. So if you think your child may be lighting fires deliberately, you must do something about it.

- Call your local Fire and Rescue Service and ask for help and advice on how to deal with the problem.
- Some Fire and Rescue Services offer a confidential service where a specially trained fire adviser visits you and your child at home to give advice and education. These services, which are safe, friendly and non-confrontational, use discussions, videos, projects and so on to get across the dangers of playing with fire.

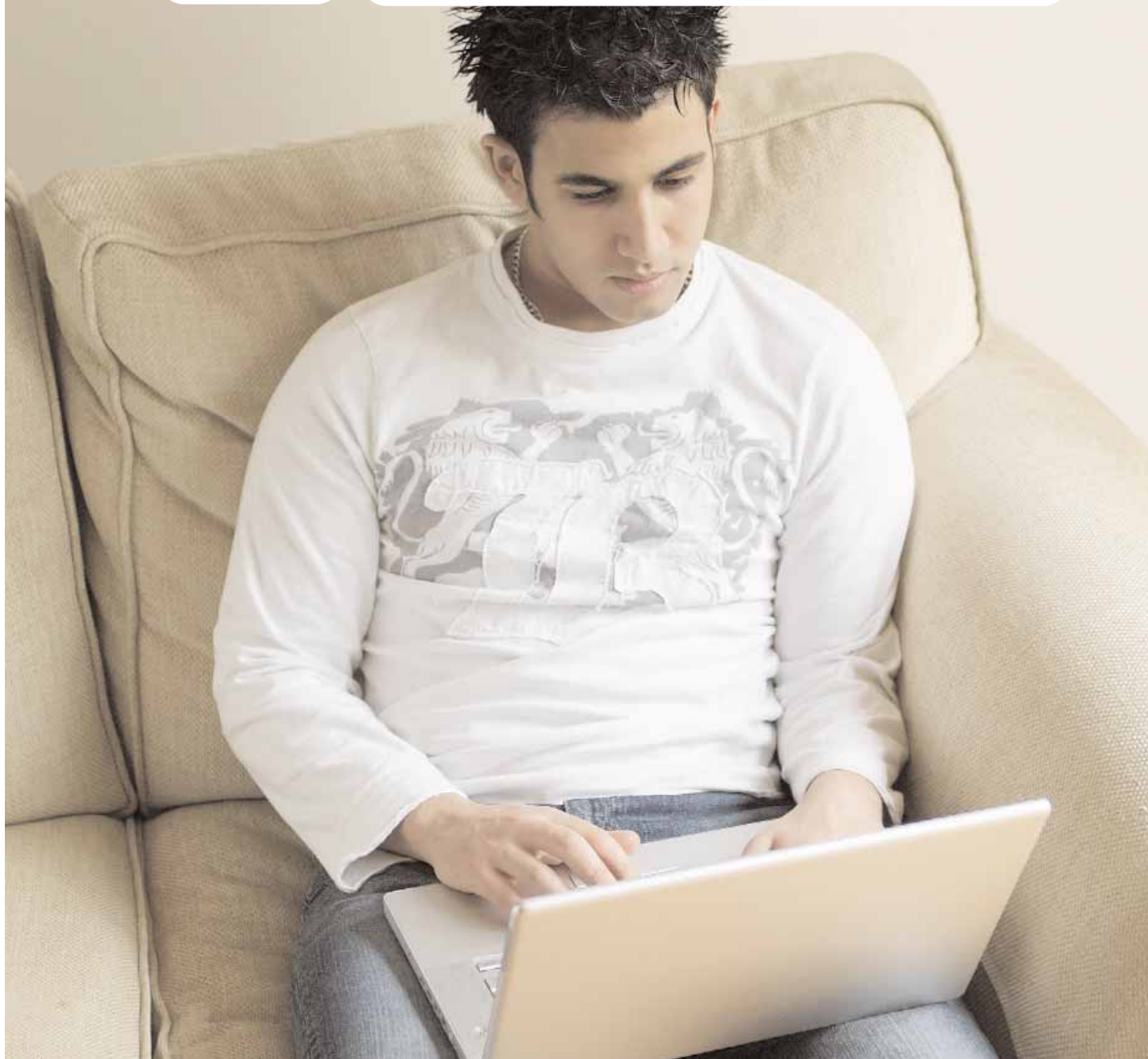


On average the Fire and Rescue Service attend 68,000 malicious false alarms a year – teach your children that it's wrong to call 999 for fun.



Contacts

In this section you will find the names and contact details of some useful organisations who will be able to provide you with further or specialist advice on fire safety in your home.





Contacts

Useful contacts

You can find more information about fire safety on the following websites.

The National Community Fire Safety Centre

Website: www.firekills.gov.uk

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Website: www.odpm.gov.uk
(click 'fire' on the drop-down menu)

The Department of Trade and Industry

Website: www.dti.gov.uk

Other useful organisations include the following.

Age Concern

Astral House
1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER
Phone: 0800 00 99 66
Email: ace@ace.org.uk
Website: www.ageconcern.org.uk

Child Accident Prevention Trust

4th Floor
Cloister Court
22–26 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AJ
Phone: 020 7608 3828
Email: safe@capt.org.uk
Website: www.capt.org.uk

Citizens' Advice

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk
(To find your local citizens advice bureau, click 'Find a CAB' under 'Advice' on the homepage.)



Contacts

Disabled Living Foundation

380–384 Harrow Road
London W9 2HU
Phone: 020 7289 6111
Website: www.dlf.org.uk

Fire Sprinklers Association

Park Court
Brimpton
Reading RG7 4ST
Phone: 0118 971 2322
Email: info@firesprinklers.info
Website: www.firesprinklers.info

Health and Safety Executive

Caerphilly Business Park
Caerphilly CF83 3GG
Phone: 0845 345 0055
Email: hseinformationservices@natbrit.com
Website: www.hse.gov.uk

Help the Aged – England

207–221 Pentonville Road
London N1 9UZ
Phone: 020 7278 1114
Email: info@helptheaged.org.uk
Website: www.helptheaged.org.uk

Help the Aged – Northern Ireland

Ascot House
Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DB
Phone: 02890 230 666
Email: infony@helptheaged.org.uk
Website: www.helptheaged.org.uk

Help the Aged – Scotland

11 Granton Square
Edinburgh EH5 1HX
Phone: 0131 551 6331
Email: infoscot@helptheaged.org.uk
Website: www.helptheaged.org.uk

Help the Aged – Wales

12 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ
Phone: 02920 346 550
Email: infocymru@helptheaged.org.uk
Website: www.helptheaged.org.uk

National Federation of the Blind of the UK

Sir John Wilson House
215 Kirkgate, Wakefield
West Yorkshire WF1 1JG
Phone: 01924 291 313
Email: nfbuk@nfbuk.org
Website: www.nfbuk.org



Contacts

Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)

12 City Forum
250 City Road
London EC1V 8AF
Phone: 020 7250 3222
Email: radar@radar.org.uk
Website: www.radar.org.uk

Royal Institute for Deaf People (RNID)

9–23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL
Phone: 0808 808 0123
Textphone: 0808 808 9000
Email: information@rnid.org.uk
Website: www.rnid.org.uk

Royal Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Phone: 020 7388 1266
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

Edgbaston Park
353 Bristol Road
Birmingham B5 7ST
Phone: 0121 248 2000
Email: help@rospa.com
Website: www.rospa.co.uk

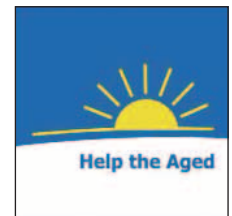
Shelter

88 Old Street
London EC1V 9HU
Phone: 0845 458 4590
Email: info@shelter.org.uk
Website: www.shelter.org.uk

Sources

Fire Statistics UK, 2003, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
British Crime Survey, 2002/03.

Partners in Fire Prevention:



FIRE PREVENTION

Essential fire prevention
information for your home



Practical checklist with
room-by-room advice



Significantly reduce the
chance of fire in your home



How to get everyone out
safely if there's a fire



Do not throw away

Please store safely



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