
Fire safety

for people in shared or
rented accommodation



**FIRE
KILLS**

**YOU CAN
PREVENT IT**

PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM FIRE

Fire safety – renting or sharing

If you live in rented accommodation or share with other people, there's a higher chance you could have a fire.

Fires cost lives and cause thousands of pounds worth of damage to your possessions. Stop and think about fire safety – it's one investment you won't regret!

Read this leaflet and use the 'home check' section to remind yourself of the fire safety basics.

Real life – **wasted**



Steve Ashford had been working all weekend so he went out for a few beers on Sunday night, before going back with a mate to his flat.

The friend left at about 11.30 and Steve went to bed. But somehow a smouldering cigarette had fallen on the sofa. At about midnight a neighbour smelt smoke. The fire brigade discovered the flat was full of thick toxic smoke.

Steve was in bed - dead. The flat had no smoke alarm. "I don't blame anyone for Steve's death" says his dad Jim. "I just feel so sad because it needn't have happened."

SMOKE ALARMS

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 as little as £5 and you can get them from supermarkets and in high-street stores. If you are buying a smoke alarm, consider getting a 10 year alarm, which may cost a few pounds more but will not require frequent battery changes.



- Fit a smoke alarm on every 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.

- Always test the batteries once a week.

EVERY WEEK TEST BATTERY	TWICE A YEAR VACUUM INSIDE	EVERY YEAR CHANGE BATTERY UNLESS IT IS A 10 YEAR ALARM	EVERY 10 YEARS REPLACE ALARM

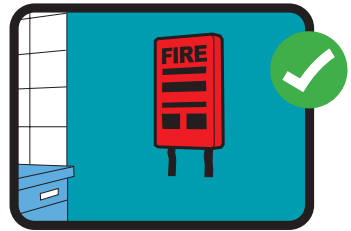


It's vital to maintain your smoke alarms.

KITCHEN SAFETY

- 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.
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- 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.

- 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.
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- Never fill chip pans more than one-third full of oil.
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- Don't use matches or lighters to light gas cookers. Spark devices are safer.



What if a pan catches fire?

You should only ever tackle a pan fire if it's in its early stages and you're completely sure you can put it out and stay safe.

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

- Run a cloth under the tap, wring it out carefully, and cover the flaming pan. If you have a fire blanket, put it over the pan.



- Never throw water over the pan.



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

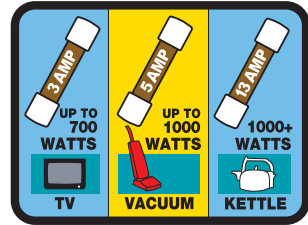
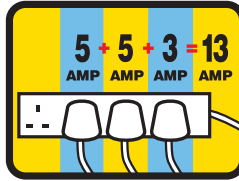


Don't take risks – *There is no such thing as a safe fire. It's better for you to prevent fire than to fight it. Tackling fire is a job best left to professional firefighters.*

ELECTRICS

Plugs and cables

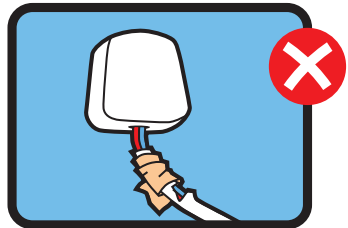
- Check the maximum amps that the fuse in the plug can handle.



- 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.
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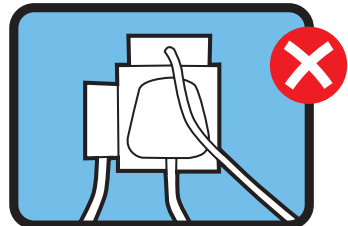
- Don't put cables under carpets or mats.
 - Check for signs of loose wiring and faulty plugs or sockets, such as scorch marks or flickering lights.
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- Replace any worn or taped-up cables and leads.



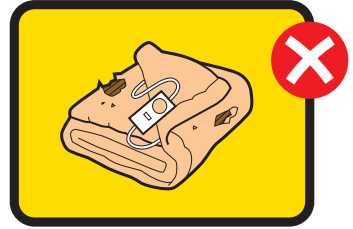
Unplug electrical appliances if you are not using them.

- Don't overload sockets – use one plug in each socket.
- Check with your landlord that major electrical appliances are regularly serviced.



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.



Portable heaters

- 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.
- Don't place heaters closer than one metre (three feet) away from curtains or furnishings and never use them for drying clothes.



Lights

- Don't position lights and bulbs near curtains and other fabrics.



Check your furniture has the permanent fire-resistant label.



CIGARETTES

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

- 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.



It's hotter than you think – cigarettes can burn at temperatures of over 700°C.

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



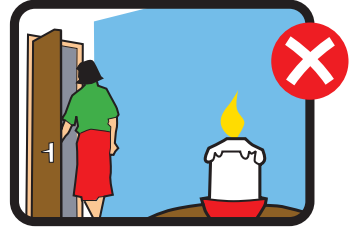
- Take responsibility and keep matches and lighters out of reach and sight of children.



CANDLES

Treat lighted candles as you would any other flame.

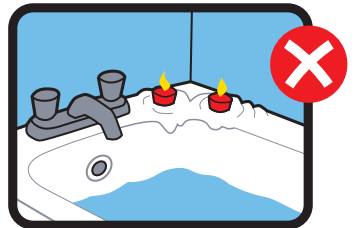
- Don't leave them unattended.
- Put them out completely at night.



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



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



It only takes a moment's distraction for a fire to start – Keep candles out of reach and sight of children and away from pets.

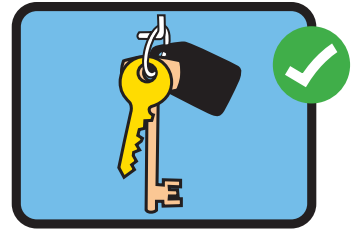
BE PREPARED – plan ahead

- Spend a few minutes thinking about how you'd get out if there was a fire. What would you do if your main escape route was blocked? Would everyone know what to do? Make sure you know the basic procedure for surviving a fire.
- It might be an idea to pin up the basic plan on the wall, especially if people often drop in or come to stay.



Know where the keys are kept

- You need to be able to find the door or window keys in a hurry.



- Agree with everyone you live with where the keys are going to be kept, and keep them there.



Keep your escape route clear

- 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.
- Keep both routes clear of obstructions.



What to do if a fire starts

- If there is smoke, keep low where the air is clearer.
- Try and keep calm. Get everyone out as quickly as possible – don't waste time investigating or rescuing valuables.



If your clothes catch fire...

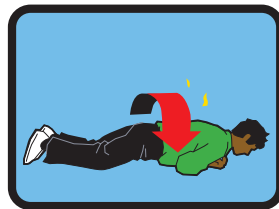
- Don't run around.
- Lie down and roll around.
- Smother the flames with a heavy material, like a coat, blanket or a fire blanket if there is one near.



STOP!



DROP!



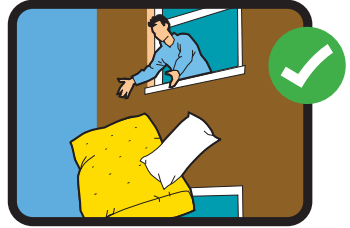
ROLL!

If escape routes are blocked...

- 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!



- 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 as soon as you are clear of the building. Use a mobile phone, phone box, or neighbour's phone.



Don't go back inside for any reason.
Wait outside for the Fire and Rescue Service.

Home check

You can prevent most fires in the home. Use the home checklist 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 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.

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 – 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 be left on such as the freezer or video recorder.
- Check the cooker is turned off.
- Don't leave the washing machine on.
- Turn heaters off and put up fireguards.
- Put out candles and cigarettes properly.
- Close inside doors as this 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 (unless it is of the ten year type);
- have your boiler serviced; and
- have any major electrical appliances serviced.

Every 10 years: - replace your smoke alarm.

What to ask your landlord

Under the 1985 Housing Act your landlord must:

- Provide an adequate means of escape.
- Depending on the size of the property provide smoke alarms and fire extinguishing equipment.

If you feel your landlord hasn't complied with the Housing Act, or if you need more information about it, contact the local Environmental Health Officer – part of the local council. The Environmental Health Officer can force your landlord to provide adequate fire precautions.

Ask your landlord the following questions.

- Has there been an electrical installation safety check recently?
- Is there a regular maintenance programme for gas heaters and appliances?
- Is the house registered with the local authority as being 'in multiple occupation'?

...But remember

- If your landlord hasn't carried out these checks, you may not be able to force him or her to do so.
- It's your life – don't leave maintenance and safety to your landlord.
- For advice, contact a Citizens Advice Bureau or the Environmental Health Officer at your local council.
- Remember, 'Shelter' provide information for people living in rented accommodation. Visit their website: www.shelternet.org.uk/privrent/index-334-Een-f0.cfm



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.

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