



Derbyshire  
Fire & Rescue Service  
Making Derbyshire Safer



# HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECK

## CHECKLIST & ADVICE





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## The Home Fire Safety Check

The home is generally regarded as the place where we feel safest, but it is also the place where the overwhelming majority of fire deaths and injuries occur. Additionally, the damage to homes and personal effects runs into many hundreds of thousands of pounds each year.

If a fire occurs in your home, your chances of survival will depend on how quickly and safely you are able to get out. This booklet aims to provide practical guidance on fire prevention in the home. A Home Fire Safety Check will provide action points to help make your home a safer place with advice on how to protect yourself and your family should the unthinkable happen.

The aims of the Home Fire Safety Check are:

- to identify possible causes of fire
- to reduce the impact of fires by fitting smoke detectors and by giving information to the public
- provide you with actions to be taken in case of fire
- to facilitate the supply of additional safety equipment in special cases.

## Smoke Detectors

Smoke detectors don't stop fires, but they do give an early warning if a fire does occur. Make sure that the detector is working and tested regularly. This should be done once a week following the manufacturer's instructions.

Most alarms are tested by pushing an obvious test button for a few seconds until the alarm sounds. When the batteries are running out, the alarm will give an occasional bleep. This will continue until the battery runs out. Batteries should normally be replaced once a year, except in the case of ten year alarms. Smoke detectors also need hoovering twice a year to keep the sensors free from dust.

Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service only supply quality smoke detectors with ten year batteries.

Smoke detectors are available for people with a hearing impairment. These have flashing lights and vibrating pads and require specialist fitting, but Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service may be able to help with this.

A fire strikes when you least expect it, often during the night. It also spreads very rapidly, but the real killer is smoke. If you are asleep when a fire starts and you don't have smoke detectors to wake you, your chance of surviving are practically ZERO. Smoke suffocates quickly, and you will most likely be dead before the flames reach you.



## Planning Your Escape Route

If a fire happens in your home, you may have to get out in dark and difficult conditions. Escaping from a fire will be a lot easier if you have already planned your escape route and know where to go.

Make sure that your planned escape route remains free of any obstructions and that there are no loose floor coverings that could trip you. Everyone in the house should be made aware of the escape route and where door and window keys are located. Ideally these should be kept near the relevant locks.

If you have serious mobility difficulties, you should consider having your bedroom on the ground floor, if this is practical, and as near as possible to an exit. If you would need assistance to make your escape, it is vital that you have some means of summoning help by your bed, such as a buzzer, intercom or telephone.

If you are installing or replacing windows, make sure at least one window above ground floor level opens fully to allow easy escape in an emergency.





## What to do if a Fire Starts

We all try to prevent fires starting in our home, but it only takes an unguarded or careless moment for a fire to start. A couple of minutes later and your home could be filled with smoke. Smoke and fumes can kill - particularly the highly poisonous smoke from some furnishings. You will only have a short time to get out; use it wisely and try not to panic.

If possible close all doors behind you as you leave. This will help delay the spread of fire and smoke.

Before opening a closed door, use the back of your hand to touch it. Don't open it if it feels warm - the fire will be on the other side.

Get everyone out as quickly as possible. Don't try to pick up valuables or possessions. Make your way out as safely as you can and try not to panic. It will help if you have planned your escape route rather than waiting until there is a fire.

Telephone the fire and rescue service on 999 from a neighbour's house, mobile phone or telephone box. Clearly state the address of the fire.

**NEVER** go back into the house until a fire officer has told you it is safe to do so.





## Living Room

- Always use a fireguard around an open fire. Fire lighters, logs or coal should be stored outside the guard - preferably in a covered container designed for this purpose.
- Mirrors should not be hung above the fire - it encourages people to get too close to the fire.
- Clothes should not be aired too close to the fire.
- Don't sit closer than 3ft/1m to a heater. Never put a heater near clothes or furnishings.
- Items such as fire lighters, matches and aerosol sprays are highly flammable - they should not be kept near any heat source.
- Never leave a lit cigarette or pipe unattended - it may fall onto an armchair or carpet which will soon catch fire and start to give off dense smoke and fumes. Never smoke in a chair if you think you may doze off in it. Always keep matches and lighters well out of reach of children.
- Do not store paper such as Christmas cards, birthday cards and letters on top of the mantelpiece or fire guard.
- Replace badly worn carpets or rugs. These can be a trip hazard, causing people to fall into a fire.
- Do not use open fires for rubbish disposal.

## The Festive Season

- During the festive season, wrapping material, decorations and trees should be kept away from any fires.
- Candles should be used with care - see practical tips further on.
- Take care not to overload electrical sockets and ALL festive lights should be turned off before going out or to bed.
- Never leave cooking unattended. Remember cooking and alcohol don't mix.



### Remember

- Heat and combustible materials are incompatible so keep them apart.
- Do not smoke in bed
- Keep matches and lighters away from children.



## Electrical Safety

Electrical fires are becoming an increasingly common cause of fire in the home. The majority are caused by faulty electrical appliances and electrical supply. This could be the electricity intake in your home or faulty and worn wiring and electricity supply cables. Loose connections and poor maintenance are also a growing concern.

It is important that you always use a qualified electrician to carry out any electrical work or repairs in your home. An electrician will ensure that the right supply, cables and fuses are in place to prevent a fire from occurring.

There are some very simple ways in which you can prevent an electrical fire from occurring:

- Always switch off electrical appliances at the socket when they are not in use, and especially when you leave the house or when you are going to bed.
- Do not overload your plug sockets. It is recommended that you only plug in a maximum of 13 amps per socket. Where possible, try to use extension leads instead of block adapters, as this can avoid the plug socket from overheating and causing a fire.
- Never place water or other liquids near to electrical appliances.
- If you have thermal insulation fitted in your loft, make sure that only one side of the cables in your loft are touching any insulation, the other side of the cable needs to remain exposed to regulate the temperature. Check to make sure you do not have thermal insulation above and below your electricity cables.
- If you are replacing a fuse, make sure it is the correct one. Use of an incorrect fuse may cause a fire.
- Make sure your consumer unit is accessible and that the surrounding area is kept relatively free of any combustible items. A fire in your consumer unit may spread to nearby items at a rapid speed.
- If you notice any signs of damage, loose connections or any scorch marks, contact an electrician straight away. If in doubt about the safety of any of your electrical appliances, supply or wiring, contact an electrician for expert advice.

## Heaters

Heaters should be kept away from furniture and fittings. Make sure that nothing can fall onto a heater.

Ideally do not use paraffin heaters. If they are used, store the paraffin outside in a metal container. Portable gas heaters should have the cylinders changed outside in the open air, or in a well ventilated atmosphere. Both gas and paraffin heaters should only be used in a well ventilated area. Cigarette lighters, petrol or gas, should not be refilled near a heat source.

If the gas supply fails, switch off all gas appliances. Have the gas company's emergency number available near the phone. Should a gas leak be suspected, the gas company should be called immediately. Electrical switches should not be operated, neither on nor off. Doors and windows should be opened and do not smoke.

Gas appliances should be checked/tested periodically to reduce the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning. You may wish to purchase and fit a carbon monoxide detector to give additional peace of mind.

Always call the gas company if you suspect a gas leak. Do not use electric switches or matches.

## Chimneys

Chimneys should be swept at least once a year, depending on use. Many elderly people fear that they will be charged if the fire and rescue service attends a chimney fire - this is not true.

If not dealt with immediately, a chimney fire can spread to the rest of the house.



During a chimney fire, red hot particles fall down the chimney onto the hearth, there will be a roaring noise up the chimney, or the chimney breast will be too hot to touch. If a chimney becomes blocked with soot there is a chance of

fumes entering the room instead of being carried outside - this can cause drowsiness and could lead to asphyxiation.

If you suspect a chimney fire, call the fire and rescue service immediately.



## Kitchen

Cooking accidents are the most common cause of accidental fires in the home. Most of these fires are started by people leaving pans of food unattended, leaving the cooker on after preparation of a meal or by leaving tea towels and other items too close to the cooker. Pans of food should not be left to cook unattended and cookers should be turned off before the leaving kitchen.

Beware that clothing made of synthetic materials readily catch fire when exposed to heat or flame.

Care should be taken with pan handles to make sure they are not placed over gas rings or hot plates.



The flex from kettles or other kitchen appliances should be kept away from cooker hotplate surfaces. All electrical appliances such as kettles, toasters or irons should be switched off at the plug when not in use.

## Deep Frying

Deep frying is a major cause of fire in the home. Chip pans should never be filled more than one third full.

The oil should not be allowed to become too hot. Wet chips should not be put into hot oil, as this could cause the oil to boil over. Chips should never be left to cook unattended. If you must deep fry, a thermostatically controlled deep fat fryer is a far safer way to do it.





## The Bedroom

Smoking in bed is another major cause of fire - the more you discourage it, the better. If you know that someone is going to smoke in bed, no matter how much you warn them, make sure a deep non-combustible ash tray is available next to the bed.

Electric blankets - make sure any new blankets have "overheat protection" which causes the electricity to cut off if it becomes too hot. Make sure that it has the British Standard "Kitemark" logo, complying with BS 3456 and "BEAB" printed on it.

If a blanket has scorch marks or exposed elements, it should not be used.

Overblankets are designed to be left switched on, but under-blankets must be switched off before getting into bed. Check which type you own and use it appropriately.

Blankets should be stored with as few folds as possible and with nothing put on top of them - this is to avoid the insulation inside breaking down.

Hot water bottles should not be used in the same bed as an electric blanket - even if the blanket is switched off.

If subdued lighting is needed, a low wattage bulb should be used in the lamp - it should never be covered with a cloth. Candles should never be used as a night light. If, for any reason, a lamp is not available, make sure that a torch is near to hand.





## A Night-time Routine

Many fires in the home start at night. Make sure you have a bedtime fire safety routine to help you and your family keep safe.

Here are a few simple things you should do every night:

- switch off and unplug all electrical appliances not designed to stay on. There are special plugs available which can be very easily inserted and removed. Details of these devices can be obtained from the Disabled Living Foundation
- make sure no cigarettes or pipes are still burning. Never smoke in bed
- before emptying ashtrays make sure the contents are cold
- switch off portable heaters
- close the doors of all rooms.

## The Bathroom

The bathroom does not cause too many problems in terms of fire but do remember that water and electricity do not mix. Heaters should be fixed high on a wall, not over the bath or within reach of the taps. If in doubt, get the advice of a qualified electrician.

Portable electric appliances should not be taken into the bathroom.

All switches must be of the “pull cord” type.

Do not store aerosol cans on the window sill.





## Practical Tips for a Safe Home

A few basic tips will, if followed, help to protect you and your home:

- take care with open fires and do not sit too close. Always use a fire guard and secure it to the wall where young children are present
- replace polyurethane foam furniture with safer, approved fire retardant foam furniture
- replace old chip pans with thermostatically controlled, automatic cut-off, deep fat fryers or use oven chips. Try to use cooker timers, where possible, as a reminder when cooking
- if smoking materials are used, make sure there are suitable ashtrays/metal containers for their use/disposal
- if you burn candles, make sure they are not left lit and unattended. Always put them in a sturdy holder and place it on a flat, heat resistant surface NEVER on top of TVs or other plastic combustible surfaces. Keep candles out of reach of children and pets and well away from curtains, furniture, clothing or draughts.
- extinguish all candles before going to bed, preferably using a “snuffer”
- electrical sockets should not be overloaded. If several appliances are in use, approved adaptors, preferably the in-line type, should be used.



# Fire Safety Check List for a Safe Home

Name:	Date:
Address:	
Station:	
Any doubts/questions - contact the fire and rescue service	

Please tick the columns provided. Any ticks in the shaded areas need action

		YES	NO
<b>General</b>			
1.	Is there an escape plan?		
2.	Has the escape plan been practiced?		
3.	Is there at least one smoke detector fitted and working per floor?		
4.	Is it correctly positioned?		
5.	Has the alarm been tested?		
6.	Is the battery fully functioning?		
7.	Are the gas appliances maintained - Carbon Monoxide?		
8.	Is the electrical system in good condition?		
9.	Are any electrical appliances run from adaptors?		
10.	Are plugs switched off at the mains and/or unplugged?		
11.	Are there any reports of fuses blowing, lights flickering or brown scorch marks on plugs or sockets?		
12.	Are heaters kept away from furniture or fittings?		
13.	Are gas or paraffin heaters changed outside, with any gas or paraffin stored outside?		
14.	Are gas or paraffin heaters used in a well ventilated area?		
15.	Are smoking materials used and disposed of correctly?		
16.	Do you have a night time routine?		
17.	Are combustibles kept away from heat sources?		
18.	Are any aerosols near any heat source including the sun?		
19.	Is your wheelie bin secure/out of view?		
<b>Living Room</b>			
20.	Is there a guard around the fire?		
21.	Is fuel stored outside the fire guard?		
22.	Is there a mirror above the fireplace?		
23.	Are there any clothes too close to a fire?		
24.	Are there any badly worn carpets or rugs?		
25.	Are chimneys swept regularly?		

Please tick the columns provided. Any ticks in the shaded areas need action

		YES	NO
<b>Kitchen</b>			
26.	Are towels kept clear of the cooker?		
27.	Are pan handles turned in and clear of hotplates?		
28.	Are flexes kept away from hotplates?		
29.	Is the chip pan more than one third full?		
30.	Do you know how to deal with a chip pan fire? Turn off the heat if possible, close the door, get everyone out and call the fire and rescue service. <b>DO NOT TRY TO PUT THE FIRE OUT YOURSELF.</b>		
<b>The Bathroom</b>			
31.	Are heaters fixed out of reach of taps, high on a wall?		
32.	Are switches controlled by a pull cord?		
<b>Bedrooms</b>			
33.	If you smoke in bed, is a deep ashtray available?		
34.	Has the electric blanket been serviced?		
35.	Is it stored with few folds, with nothing on top?		
36.	Are there any scorch marks on it?		
37.	Does it have the BS "Kitemark" and BEAB on it?		
38.	Are there any candles or materials to subdue lighting?		

## Fire Safety Check Action List

Number	Action Required	Completed

The above action list details the recommendations made by Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service to make your home a safer place for you and your family. If you need any further advice, please contact your local Area Office:

- South** Derby Office      **01332 291134**      (Derby City and South Derbyshire)  
                  Ilkeston Office      **01159 326832**      (Erewash and Amber Valley)
- North** Chesterfield Office      **01246 223500**      (North East Derbyshire, Chesterfield and Bolsover)  
                  Buxton Office      **01298 22620**      (High Peak and Derbyshire Dales)



## FireSafe

### Juvenile Firesetting Intervention Scheme

#### Guidance for parents and guardians of children who play with fire

- A fascination with fire and naked flames is normal for the majority of children at some stage in their development.
- Always attempt to explain to them the danger of playing with fire and uncontrolled fire.
- Monitor your child's friends for group fire setting and remember that peer pressure is a difficult thing for children to ignore. Talk to the other parents/guardians involved.
- Keep matches, lighters and other ignition sources out of your children's reach. Do not put temptation in their way.
- Make sure you fit and maintain smoke detectors.
- Please call the number below for advice and guidance on fire setting by youngsters, whoever they may be.

- If you think other children are fire setting, then give the contact number and information to a responsible adult.
- If there is still a problem, even after a visit, we will be glad to come back and re-inforce our message.
- Visits are made by fire and rescue service staff who are trained to talk to young people about the dangers of fire setting.

**The number you should ring for either advice or a visit from our advisors is 01773 523863 or 01332 771221 (out of hours).**



If you would like any fire safety information, please call your nearest **Area Office**.



WE NEVER THOUGHT IT  
WOULD HAPPEN TO US

Question **YOUR** Perception...

Is the risk of **FIRE** something you ever consider?



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Fire & Rescue Service  
Making Derbyshire Safer

for more information:  
[www.derbys-fire.gov.uk](http://www.derbys-fire.gov.uk)  
T 01332 771221



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