

# Your Guide to Fire Safety



## Fire risk

Your home really means a lot to you. That's why you work so hard to make it just how you want it. But your home is more at risk from fire than you realise.

Maybe you think fire can't touch you. Maybe you think you've got it covered – 3 out of every 4 Scots believe their home isn't at risk from fire.

But did you know that...

- you're twice as likely to die in a house fire in Scotland than in any other part of the UK?
- there are around 63,000 house fires in the UK every year?
- around 500 people are killed every year and around 14,000 people are injured?

Ordinary people, just like you. Maybe they never gave fire a second thought either ... until it was too late.

Still think you've got it covered? Because it's often when you're busy – or just not thinking – that fire takes hold ... and takes a life.

**This risk assessment will help you to identify potential fire hazards in your home. And when a hazard is detected, it suggests how to deal with it.**

### Q1 Do you have a smoke alarm? Yes No

If you have a fire in your home, a smoke alarm will buy you valuable time. Time to put your escape plan into action. Time to get your family to safety. Modern smoke alarms are neat and unobtrusive. They cost around £5 to £8. You don't need to be a DIY expert to fit one. You do need to fit a battery.

#### Where should I fit a smoke alarm?

If your home is on one level fix it to the ceiling in the hallway, between the living room and bedrooms. For extra safety, fit extra alarms in bedrooms. If your home has more than one floor, fit one alarm at the bottom of the stairs and another on each upstairs landing.

#### Test your smoke alarm every week

If your alarm is bleeping from time to time, you need to fit a new battery. If the alarm doesn't work, fit a new battery. If it still doesn't work, buy a new alarm. Change the battery once a year, even if it's still working. Do it on a day you'll always remember. Another birthday, another battery – New Year, new battery. And vacuum the inside and outside casing once a year, when you change the battery.

#### Special needs

There are special alarms for older people, and for people with disabilities and other special needs.

### Q2 Do you have a fire action plan? Yes No

Make an escape plan for your home today. You don't need to be an expert. Just think it through. How would you get everyone out at night? How would you get the kids out? How would granny cope? Then tell everyone what the plan is. Practise what you'd do if you had a real fire. You could live to regret it if you don't.

### Q3 Does someone in the family smoke? Yes No

Be really careful if you're smoking, especially when you're tired or you've been drinking alcohol. Make sure that you stub out your cigarettes in an ashtray. And always empty the ashtray – pour water over cigarette ends before putting them in the bin outside.

### Q4 Do you sometimes light candles in the house? Yes No

Make sure you place them carefully in proper candleholders. Make sure they won't fall over. Make sure they don't set light to cards or clothes nearby. Never leave a burning candle unattended. If you're going out – or going to sleep – make sure candles are out.

**Q5 Do you check the fuses for your electrical appliances?** Yes No

The fuse in a plug is a safety device that will 'blow' if an electrical appliance develops a fault. That cuts off the electricity to stop the appliance from overheating and causing a fire. Make sure all your appliances are fitted with the correct fuse:

3 amp fuse	13 amp fuse
lamps/bed lights	refrigerators
television/radios	heaters
electric blankets	kettles/toasters
music system/videos	washing machines/driers
clocks/computers	irons/hair driers

\* these are guidelines only. Check the manufacturer's instructions.

**Q6 Do you unplug and switch off appliances when they're not in use?** Yes No

Faults in electrical appliances can cause overheating. That can cause fires. Switch off and unplug appliances like TVs, washing machines and tumble driers that aren't designed to be left switched on.

**Q7 Do you have any electrical cables running under carpets or rugs?** Yes No

If you're walking over cables – even when they're covered by a carpet – you can damage them. That can cause fires.

**Q8 Do you use electrical adaptors or strip plugs?** Yes No

Adaptors let you plug more than one appliance into an electrical socket. But if you overload the adaptor, it can cause a fire. Always make sure your adaptor is fitted with a fuse and has a kite mark from the British Electrotechnical Approvals Board, BEAB. Never use more than one adaptor in each socket. Never overload an adaptor. Appliances connected to the adaptor should never use more than 13 amps of electricity in total (equivalent to 3 kilowatts). Check appliance handbooks for details.

**Q9 Do you ever join two electrical cables with tape?** Yes No

Never repair or rejoin cables with insulating tape. Always replace the whole cable, or use an extension lead.

**Q10 Do you have a standard or table lamp fitted with a high powered light bulb?** Yes No

All lamp shades are marked with the maximum wattage of light bulb that can be used safely. Using a higher rated bulb can cause the shade to overheat and catch fire. And never cover a lampshade.

**Did you know that in some parts of Scotland, 1 house in every 10 will have a kitchen fire in the next 10 years?**

**Q11 Do you use a chip pan or hot oil to cook?** Yes No

Deep frying – using fat or oil – causes around 9,500 fires every year in the UK. But that doesn't have to happen. The best way to avoid having a fire is to use a thermostat-controlled electric deep fat fryer. They're much safer to use – the safety cut-out (the thermostat) controls the temperature of the fat or oil.

If you must use a deep frying pan, never fill it more than one-third full of fat or oil. Never walk away – not even for a few seconds – when the pan's on the heat. And never – ever – deep fry with fat or oil when you've been drinking alcohol.

If your pan catches fire, never try to move it. Never throw water on burning fat or oil. If you can, turn off the heat. Then put a damp towel over the pan to smother the flames. Then wait 30 minutes to let the pan cool down. Always phone the fire brigade, even if you think you've put the fire out.

**Q12 Do you grill fatty foods?** Yes No

You should clean the grill pan every time you use it. If you don't, fat deposits will build up and can easily catch fire.

**Q13 Do you have electrical appliances or cables near the cooker?** Yes No

Heat from a cooker can easily damage an electrical appliance or cable and cause a fire. Always keep appliances and cables a safe distance from your cooker.

**Q14 Do you ever dry towels near, or on top of, the cooker?** Yes No

Even damp towels can easily catch fire. Never dry towels near, or on top of, the cooker.

**Q15 Do you have an open fire? Yes No**

Never use flammable liquids – like barbecue fuel – to light a fire. And use a fireguard whenever the fire is lit. Never walk away from an unguarded fire. Never dry clothes in front of the fire. Never keep furniture closer than 1 metre (3 feet) from the fire. Always have your chimney swept every year.

**Q16 Do you have a mirror over the fireplace? Yes No**

Someone looking in the mirror may be standing too close to the fire and their clothes might catch fire. Move the mirror somewhere safer.

**Q17 Do you use a portable heater? Yes No**

Make sure that heaters are placed at least 1 metre (3 feet) away from flammable materials like a chair or clothing. And don't sit too near to the heater – if you fall asleep you can easily burn yourself.

**Q18 Do you use an electric blanket? Yes No**

Check the blanket, plug and flex regularly for damage. If you're in any doubt, don't use the blanket. Tie under-blankets securely to the bed.

**Q19 Do you leave it switched on when you're in bed? Yes No**

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Never leave an electric blanket switched on when you're in bed unless it's marked 'suitable for all night use'.

**Q20 Do you still have a guarantee for your blanket? Yes No**

Blankets don't last for ever. After the guarantee runs out – usually after 3 years – you should have the blanket tested and serviced regularly by the manufacturer. But check the cost. You may find it cheaper to buy a new blanket. A new blanket should be approved by BEAB or marked BS EN 60907. It's best if it's fitted with an overheat protection safety system.

**Q21 Do you smoke in bed? Yes No**

Never smoke in bed. Ever. It's just too easy to drop off to sleep. You might not wake up. Ever.

### **Before you go to bed**

- 1 Switch off and unplug all electrical appliances not designed to be left on overnight
- 2 Stub out all cigarettes and always empty ashtrays. Pour water over cigarette ends before putting them in the bin outside
- 3 Put fireguards around open fires. Don't build up the fire before you go to bed
- 4 Switch off portable heaters
- 5 Close all doors – it can keep your escape route free from smoke and may stop a fire spreading
- 6 Make sure the main door keys are to hand

### **If fire breaks out**

- 1 Get out and stay out. Don't waste time collecting valuables. Your life is more valuable than anything you own
- 2 Phone the fire brigade. It's free to dial 999 from any phone
- 3 Never try to go back inside your house until the firefighters tell you it's safe

### **If you can't get out**

- 1 Get everyone into one room (if possible one with a phone). But never open a door if it's warm to touch
- 2 When everyone's in the room, pack clothes, cushions, pillows or towels around the door to keep smoke out
- 3 Open a window and shout until someone phones the fire brigade. Stay at the open window

- 4 If you're on the first floor, you may be able to drop some pillows or cushions and then lower yourself from the windowsill. But only ever attempt this as a last resort
- 5 If there are two adults, one should go first to catch children. Pass them slowly and stretch full length before you let them go
- 6 No-one should ever jump
- 7 If you're on a higher floor, lean out of the window for fresh air until the firefighters arrive

### **If your clothing catches fire**

- 1 STOP, DROP to the floor and ROLL to put out the flames
- 2 If someone else's clothes catch fire use blankets, rugs or thick coats to help put out the flames

### **Child safety**

- 1 Don't leave matches and lighters where children can get them
- 2 Don't leave candles burning unattended
- 3 Make sure fires and heaters have fixed guards
- 4 Don't place toys nearer than 1 metre (3 feet) to anything hot. Even if the toys don't catch fire, your child may be burned

## 10 key points

- 1 Make your ESCAPE plan now
- 2 PRACTISE your escape route with your family
- 3 DON'T STOP for valuables
- 4 SHOUT to alert your family
- 5 KEEP LOW – air is clearer and cooler near the floor
- 6 DON'T INVESTIGATE – keep doors closed
- 7 If there's no safe way out, get everyone into a SAFE ROOM
- 8 Never jump out of a window. You may be able to LOWER yourself onto pillows and cushions. But only ever attempt this as a last resort
- 9 If you BREAK a window, cover jagged edges before climbing out
- 10 WHEN YOU'RE OUT – STAY OUT – DIAL 999



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