

Home Fire Safety

Did you know?

In 2006/7 there were 36,500 accidental fires in the home and many of these were caused by a single moment of carelessness. The majority of them could have been prevented and it's easy to see why when you consider that;

- Over half of home fires are caused by cooking accidents.
- More than five fires a day are started by candles.
- Every three days someone dies from a fire caused by a cigarette.
- Faulty electrics (appliances, wiring and overloaded sockets) cause around 7,000 house fires across the country every year.

It is important to be aware of possible fire hazards around the home and to take steps to protect you and your family from fire. Fortunately, there are some relatively simple things you can do to reduce the risk of a fire in your home and minimise the consequences should the worst happen.

Working smoke alarms save lives

The easiest thing you can do is install a smoke alarm. A working smoke alarm will give you a vital extra few moments to get your family out of harm's way in the event of a fire. Most smoke alarms are fitted with a test button so that you can easily check it's working. Test the smoke alarm once a week and change the batteries at least once a year (**except those with fixed 10-year batteries**).

- You're twice as likely to die in a fire if you don't have a working smoke alarm.
- 90 people die each year because the battery in their smoke alarm was flat or missing

During recent years, HFI have issued thousands of Fire Angel smoke alarms to new tenants. The Fire Angel fits into a pendant light fitting and is charged-up whenever the light is used. This saves you buying batteries, is more convenient and involves less worry. If you have a Fire Angel smoke alarm and it starts to beep, this indicates it needs to be recharged by turning the light it is plugged into on for about 8 hours.

If you are concerned about your fire safety, you can also contact the London Fire Brigade on 08000 284 428. The Fire Brigade will arrange to carry out a free Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) to your home, providing you with practical advice to keep yourself safe. They will also install free 10 year smoke alarms where required.

Blocks of flats, including High Rise

Blocks of flats (including high rise) are designed to be fire resistant and most fires don't spread through more than one or two rooms. Fireproof walls, ceilings and doors will hold back flames and smoke.

- If there's a fire elsewhere in the building you are still usually safer staying in your flat unless heat or smoke is directly affecting you.

- It is not normally necessary to evacuate your home unless the fire is very close to your property. The Fire Brigade will evacuate only those properties at risk.
- Some flats were designed and constructed with alternative means of escape from each individual property, for example another door leading out other than the front entrance door. If your property has an alternative means of escape, you should check it regularly to ensure it is in working order and it's free from obstructions.
- If you become aware of a fire in your block, try to close your windows and doors, this should help reduce any possible spread of fire from other properties or from one floor to another.
- If the fire is outside your flat, seal your front door with tape if you can, as well as using damp towels or bedding. Close any ventilators or fans and call 999, giving the number of your flat.
- If your front door becomes hot, wet it down as best you can to cool it.

If fire breaks out in your home

- If it's safe to do so, close all doors to prevent the fire from spreading
- Get everyone out quickly
- Call the fire brigade by dialing 999, giving the exact address of the fire. Always use a neighbour's phone, public phone box or a mobile – never go back into your home to use your home phone
- Stay out of your home until the fire brigade tells you it's safe to return.

If you think you're in danger but you cannot escape

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, to prevent smoke and fumes from getting into the room.
- If the room does get smoky, get down low, the air will be cleaner at floor level. Never open the door and try to run through the smoke and fire to safety.
- Open the window and stay near it for fresh air and to alert firefighters when they arrive.
- If you feel in serious danger, wave a sheet out of the window so that firefighters know you're there.
- If you have a phone, call the fire brigade. If you don't have a phone, shout for help so that someone else can phone for you.

Top tips for fire safety

Remember, the vast majority of fires are preventable so please;

- Always put cigarettes out properly before emptying ash trays and don't smoke in bed.
- Candleholders should be deep and placed on flat, heat resistant surfaces, such as ceramic plates.

- Keep matches and candles away from children and make sure nothing is around candles that could catch fire (such as curtains)
- Never dry or air clothes around fires or cookers and use a fire guard if necessary.
- Unplug or switch off all electrical equipment not being used
- Look out for danger signs of faulty appliances or wiring such as hot plugs and sockets or blackening around them.
- Don't overload electrical sockets - try and keep to one plug per socket.
- Take extra care when frying chips or other foods, hot oil can catch fire easily.
- If your pan catches fire, do not attempt to put it out. Turn the cooker off if safe to do so and leave the room, closing the door behind you.
- Never throw water on a chip pan fire (or any oil fire), you could get badly injured.
- Plan your escape in the event of a fire and make sure everyone in your home knows what to do if a fire breaks out.
- Make a bedtime check that all exits are clear, appliances are off, door and window keys are accessible and candles and cigarettes are properly put out.
- Close all doors before going to bed to help prevent the spread of smoke and fire.
- Keep fire exits and escape routes clear. This could be a door leading from your home, a balcony walkway or any shared landing or staircase. The hall may be the only way out of your home so make sure there is nothing in the way that might slow you down.
- Take special care when you are tired or when you are under the influence of alcohol. Half of all deaths from domestic fires happen between 10pm and 8am.
- Report dumped rubbish that may cause a fire hazard in communal areas via your Estate Services team at the Area Housing Office.
- You should not have barbeques on balconies.
- It is illegal to smoke in the internal common areas of your block