



Home safe home

Keeping your nearest and dearest fire safe





As we get older, the chances of having a fire in our home, and being injured or worse, increase dramatically.

This booklet contains some simple fire-safety advice to keep your loved ones – and your possessions – safe from the risk of fire.



Golden rules of fire safety

Learn the fire-safety basics.

- 1** Working smoke alarms save lives
- 2** Make your home fire safe
- 3** Be prepared
- 4** Get out, stay out!
- 5** Call 111

Prevention

At no cost to you,
we're here to help

Your local fire station is here to help you.

For no cost to you, we are happy to visit your home and:

- ▶ **install smoke alarms** if you do not have them installed already. All you need to do is buy your smoke alarms before we come – refer to page 7 on which smoke alarms to get, and how many you will need
- ▶ **check existing smoke alarms** to ensure they are working and are in the right places. **We can also replace batteries.** You will need one 9 volt battery for each smoke alarm
- ▶ **help you make an escape plan** so you can get out of your house quickly if you have a fire.

FACT:

In **80%** of house fires the Fire Service attend each year, smoke alarms were either not installed or not working.



Don't let this happen to you.

Give us a call. You can find the phone number for your local fire station in the phone book under **Fire Service**.

If you live in an area with a volunteer brigade, there may not be anyone at the station to take your call. Leave a message with your details and we'll call you back.

Only working smoke alarms save lives



- ▶ **You need a minimum of one smoke alarm** in the house and that should be installed in the hallway closest to the bedrooms.
- ▶ **Our advice, is to have smoke alarms in every bedroom, living area and the hallway** of the house – put them in the middle of the ceiling in each room.
- ▶ **Do not put them in the kitchen** as daily cooking heat and steam, and the toaster, can set the alarm off unnecessarily. Don't put them in the bathroom, laundry or garage.
- ▶ **Smoke alarms that are hard-wired** (ie wired into your house's electrical circuits – just like a light) are the best option, that way you don't need to replace batteries. You will need a qualified electrician to do this for you.
- ▶ **There are special smoke alarms** for people who have impaired hearing. Talk to your local deaf support organisation about the options.

The Fire Service recommends long-life, photoelectric type smoke alarms – like the one pictured opposite. Most hardware stores and supermarkets have these.

FACT:

2 to 3 minutes

is all it takes for a fire to destroy everything you own. The plastics, synthetic stuffing and other materials found in modern furnishings burn faster and give off more poisonous smoke than ever before.

30
seconds



Test your smoke alarms regularly

- ▶ **To check your smoke alarm** is working press the test button. If all is OK you will hear a loud beep or series of beeps. Use a broom handle if your smoke alarm is hard to reach.
- ▶ **Replace the batteries at least once a year** using a 9 volt battery. A good way to remember to do this, is to time battery replacement around the beginning or end of daylight saving. Long-life photo-electric smoke alarms will give you 10 years of smoke detection without needing to replace the batteries.
- ▶ **Keep your smoke alarms clean** – free of dust and spider webs to help keep them in working order.

60
seconds



3
minutes



Speed of fire

1950s

10 to 15 minutes for fire to destroy a home and its contents

Today

2 to 3 minutes for fire to destroy a home and its contents

Making your home fire safe



It's easy to make your home fire safe.

Here are a few things that could save your life.

Cooking

- ▶ **NEVER leave cooking unattended.** Unattended cooking is the leading cause of fire and fire fatalities in New Zealand. If you need to leave the kitchen to answer the door or the phone, even for a minute, turn the stove off.
- ▶ **NEVER throw water on a frypan that's on fire.** It doesn't take long for fat or oil in a frypan to heat up enough to burst into flames. Throwing water on it simply makes the fat or oil explode. If you can, use a pot lid or a large flat object like a chopping board or a wet tea towel and place it over the pan to starve the fire of oxygen. Never attempt to carry the pan outside.
- ▶ **If you do have a fire** on your stove, try (if you can) to turn the power or gas off at either the stove or the mains.
- ▶ **Regularly clean your stove** to prevent the build up of spilled fats and burnt foods which can cause fires. If you have a rangehood, the filters need to be cleaned regularly. Did you know you can put these in the dishwasher?
- ▶ **Keep curtains, tea towels, oven mitts** and anything flammable well away from the cooking area. Wear tight fitting sleeves or roll them up when you are cooking.
- ▶ **If you have been drinking alcohol** or have taken medication that makes you sleepy, don't attempt to cook on your stove top. Use the microwave to reduce the risk.

Alcohol is involved in too many fatal house fires. Don't drink and fry.

FACT:

Over **half** of all deaths occur in homes while people are sleeping.



Going to bed

- ▶ **Turn off** your electric blanket before you get into bed.
- ▶ **If you smoke, don't do it in bed.** The consequences of falling asleep with a lit cigarette can be tragic.
- ▶ **Before going to bed:**
 - make sure all heaters, appliances and lights are switched off, except for night lights that you may have for your own safety. Switch your TVs off at the wall – do not leave them in 'standby' mode
 - if you have an open fire, make sure the fire is out and that you have a proper fireguard in place
 - check your keys are in the deadlocks so you can get out quickly in an emergency
 - close any doors to the kitchen and living rooms to slow a fire spreading to bedrooms.
- ▶ **It's a good idea to keep a torch and a phone** next to your bed.

Home heating

- ▶ **Always keep everything at least one metre away from any heating.** This includes yourself, clothing that you may be drying, furniture and bedding. Never place or hang clothes on a heater to dry.
- ▶ **Tragically, older people are more likely to have clothing catch alight** by wearing loose-fitting clothing and being too close to an open flame, heater or fire.
- ▶ **Open fires should be screened** with a proper fireguard and NEVER left unattended. Dispose of ashes safely in a metal bucket – ashes can take up to three days to cool. Ensure you have your chimney checked and/or swept each year.

Remember

to keep everything at least one metre from any heating.



FACT:

Half of people who died in fires were careless with their cigarettes, matches or lighters.



Smoking

- ▶ **If you are tired**, have been drinking alcohol or taken medications that make you sleepy, avoid smoking. If you fall asleep with the cigarette still alight it could start a fire.
- ▶ **Ensure that all cigarettes, pipes, cigars or matches** have been properly extinguished before you leave a room. And always keep these out of reach of the grandchildren.
- ▶ **Never leave burning cigarettes unattended.**
- ▶ **Ideally, confine smoking to outdoors.**

Electric blankets

- ▶ **Worn and old electric blankets** can cause electric shock, fire and possibly even death.
- ▶ **At the first sign of wear**, have your electric blanket checked by a qualified electrician.
- ▶ **Do not place heavy objects on the bed** while the electric blanket is on.
- ▶ **Make sure the electric blanket is always flat** on the bed and that controls or cords are not twisted or caught between the mattress and the base of the bed. Twisted cords are a common cause of electric blanket fires.
- ▶ **When putting your electric blanket away** for the summer, don't fold it, roll it.
- ▶ **If your electric blanket is more than 10 years old**, consider replacing it with a newer heat-protected model. These are much safer to use.

Twisted cords are a common cause of electric blanket fires.



FACT:

Overloaded electrical circuits, faulty electrical equipment and misuse of electrical equipment are common causes of fire.



Electrical safety

- ▶ **Do not overload** any power sockets (including multi-boxes) with double adapters. There should be only one appliance per power socket. Consider multi-boxes with circuit breakers.
- ▶ **If you have any concern about** the performance of any appliances like electric blankets, heaters, toasters or microwaves, have them checked by a qualified electrician. When buying secondhand appliances ensure they have been certified as safe.
- ▶ **Make sure leads on appliances** are in good condition and not frayed.
- ▶ **Extension cords are not designed** as permanent replacements to your home's internal wiring. Never put them under carpets or mats or use them while they are tightly coiled.

- ▶ **Turn off and, where practical unplug non-essential appliances** from the wall when not in use. Some TVs still have power flowing when in standby mode. The best practice is to switch them off at the wall.
- ▶ **Use light bulbs with appropriate wattage** for the size of the light fixture. Using a bulb with too many watts may cause overheating and fire.
- ▶ **Regularly clean electrical appliances** to prevent the build up of dust and the risk of over heating.
- ▶ **Do not place** heaters, televisions, clothes dryers and other electrical equipment in areas with restricted airflow as overheating may occur.

Drying your clothes

- ▶ **Remove lint** from the clothes dryer filter after each use.
- ▶ **Ensure there is proper ventilation** and airspace around the clothes dryer. Ideally, the vent should be outside the house.

Static electricity

and build up of heat can cause dust, lint and chemical residue on clothing to ignite.



If the worst should happen... be prepared



In a house fire, smoke builds up quickly, reducing visibility and disorienting even trained firefighters. For this reason alone, it is important to be prepared and have a plan for escaping your house quickly in the event of a fire.

- ▶ **Work out two escape routes for every room**, this may include windows. Make sure that all doors and windows needed for escape are clear and will open easily. If you have an upstairs area, think about a safe way to get to the ground level.
- ▶ **Practise your escape plan regularly**, including at night with the lights off. So in the event of a fire in your home, rather than panic, you'll instinctively know what to do. If you have family or grandchildren staying over, go over your escape plan with them too.
- ▶ **ALWAYS keep keys in deadlocks** on doors and windows so you can get out.

You will have
1 to 2 minutes
from the sounding of the
smoke alarm to when your
life is seriously threatened
by fire or smoke.



At the first sign of a fire

- ▶ **Do not attempt to put the fire out yourself.** Get out – FAST!
- ▶ **If there are others in the house,** shout FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! and tell them to get out.
- ▶ **If the fire is well underway and you are overcome by smoke,** get down on your hands and knees and crawl out of the house. Heat and smoke rise, so breathing and visibility will be better at ground level. Smoke inhalation is a major cause of fire deaths.
- ▶ **If you can, close doors behind you** as you exit – this helps prevent the fire and smoke from spreading.

- ▶ **Always keep your keys in the door deadlocks** when you are at home. Ensure doors are maintained so they can be opened easily. People have died in fires because their doors have been deadlocked with keys kept somewhere else – they haven't been able to get out.

You are more at risk of a fire in your home than you are from an intruder.

- ▶ **Go to a neighbour** and get them to call 111 immediately.
- ▶ **Keep well away from the house** and NEVER re-enter it.
- ▶ **If you are unable to get out** of the house, close the door of the room you are in and put a towel under it to stop seeping smoke coming in. Go to the window and yell 'FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!' Wait to be rescued.

A house when fully ablaze can reach temperatures of **1100°C +**. Water boils at 100°C. The body starts to shut down at 70°C.





A big part of the Fire Service's job is helping people protect themselves from the dangers of fire, so we're more than happy to come and provide you with a free fire-safety inspection.

There are a couple of ways to do this:

- 1** Call us on 0800 NZ FIRE (0800 693 473) and make an appointment for a fire crew to pop around.
- 2** Call your local fire station (under Fire Service in the phone book). Please note, if you live in an area that is served by a volunteer fire brigade, there may be no one at the station to answer you call. Just leave a message with your name and number and you'll be called back.

If you are unsure about anything in this booklet or if you require assistance in any way to make your home fire safe, call your local fire station.

You can also check our website which has more detailed information
www.fire.org.nz



www.fire.org.nz

Working with communities to protect what they value | Te mahi tahi ki ngā hapori, ki te tiaki i a rātou taonga