

Fire Safety – Renting or Sharing

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.

It's vital to maintain your smoke alarms.

- Always test the batteries once a week.
- You can buy smoke alarms fitted with a 'hush button' so you can silence the alarm if it goes off by mistake.
- 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.

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

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.
- 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.*

What to do if a pan catches fire?

- 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.
- Never fill chip pans more than one-third full of oil.
- Don't use matches or lighters to light gas cookers. Spark devices are safer.
- Don't move the pan and never throw water over it.
- Turn off the heat under the pan (if it's safe to do so) and allow it to cool completely.

Don't take any risks – get everyone out of your home and call the Fire and Rescue Service.

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.

Get Out Stay Out and call 999

IF THERE'S A FIRE...

ELECTRICS

Plugs and cables

- Don't overload sockets – use one plug in each socket.
- 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.
- Check the maximum amps that the fuse in the plug can handle.
- 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.
- Replace any worn or taped-up cables and leads.
- Check with your landlord that major electrical appliances are regularly serviced.

Unplug electrical appliances if you are not using them.

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 meter (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.

- 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.

CIGARETTES

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

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

CANDLES

Treat lighted candles as you would any other flame.

- Keep candles away from anything that can catch fire, for example, furnishings, fabrics and curtains.
- 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.
- Don't leave them unattended.
- Put them out completely at night.

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 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.
- 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.

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 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.
- 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 escape routes are blocked...

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

- Call 999 as soon as you are clear of the building. Use a mobile phone, phone box, or neighbour's phone.
- If you can't open the window – break the glass in the bottom corner. Make jagged edges safe with a towel or blanket.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

- 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.

What are your landlord's obligations?

The 2004 Housing Act requires the landlord to do several things about fire safety:

- There has to be an adequate means of escape
- Depending on the size of the property, there may have to be smoke alarms and fire extinguishing equipment

If the property is an HMO subject to licensing (3 stores and above and 5 or more people not living as a single household), your landlord must also comply with license conditions in relation to fire safety.

By law, your landlord must:

- Make sure that all the gas appliances they provide are maintained in good order and that a Corgi-registered plumber carries out a safety check each year
- Maintain all electrical installations (fixed wiring and so on) and any electrical appliances they provide (cookers, kettles and so on) and make sure they are safe to use
- Make sure any furniture and furnishings they provide meet the fire resistance regulations

Your council's Environmental Health Officer will be able to give you more details about your landlord's obligations and can force your landlord to provide adequate fire precautions.

For further information on your landlord's responsibilities, visit www.communities.gov.uk