



R B F & R S

news release

11/11/2008

No: 59/F&R

STAY SAFE THIS WINTER

With winter almost here, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is reminding Berkshire residents to stay warm but keep safe as the cold weather takes hold.

As it gets colder and darker, we all tend to spend more time indoors and might take additional steps to keep warm, such as using heaters, open fires and electric blankets. However, these can all increase the risk of an accidental fire starting in the home.

Make sure you stay safe and warm this winter by following these simple tips:

Fires and heaters

Open fires can provide a relaxing and atmospheric way to keep warm, whereas portable heaters can be moved around to wherever they are needed but it's important to use them safely.

- Always use a fire guard to protect against flying sparks and hot embers from an open fire.
- Make sure embers are under control and properly put out before you go out or go to bed.
- Keep portable heaters away from curtains and furniture – and never use them for drying clothes.
- Always unplug electric heaters when you go out or go to bed.

Electric blankets

Electric blankets can help you keep warm during the cold nights but fires caused by them can cause devastating injuries.

- Never use hot water bottles in the same bed as an electric blanket, even if the blanket is switched off.
- Unplug blankets before you get into bed, unless they have a thermostat control for safe all-night use.
- Don't leave electric blankets folded, as this damages the internal wiring. Store them flat or rolled up instead.

Contd/...

Candles

Candles can be a great way to brighten up the dark evenings but, as with open fires, naked flames can be hazardous if they are not treated carefully.

- Make sure candles are secured in proper holders.
- Keep candles away from materials that may catch fire, such as curtains.
- Always check that you have extinguished candles properly before you leave the room or go to bed.

Jane Weller, Community Safety Officer, said: "It's important to keep warm when the weather is cold but please make sure you stay safe at the same time. By following our advice, you could significantly reduce the risk of a fire starting in your home.

"It is also vital to make sure you have working smoke alarms. Fitting smoke alarms to every level of your home and testing the batteries weekly could save your life in the event of a fire."

RBFRS offers free Home Fire Safety Checks, providing advice on how to make an escape plan and the installation of free smoke alarms where necessary. To book yours, call freephone 0800 587 6679 or email community.safety@rbfrs.co.uk. (Please note that priority will be given to households or individuals identified by us to be at a greater risk of accidental fire in the home, e.g. the elderly and those suffering from long term illness.)

ENDS.