

Home Fire Safety Check

Self- Assessment form

In this Home Fire Safety Check we will be looking at the following areas:

- Smoke alarms
 - Kitchen safety
 - Electrical safety
 - Other fire risks (candles, heaters, electric blankets, etc.)
 - Making a Fire Escape Plan
 - What to do if there is a fire
-

All information is provided from statistical analysis of fires in the home which occurred in Berkshire between 2006 to 2011.

Some useful preliminary information

Main causes of fires in the home are:

Distraction

A large amount of fires occur in the home when the attention of occupiers is diverted from the original task, these can include:-

- Forgetting about food in the oven or on the hob
- Leaving heaters unattended near combustible materials etc.
- Falling asleep
- Answering the telephone or door
- Getting involved in conversations, i.e. with your children, friends etc.

Unsuitable/ dangerous equipment

Old or damaged appliances or equipment which have not been maintained properly can cause fires in the home. Items may have a build up of grease, dust or have electrical faults, leading to overheating.

Now take a few moments to answer the following questions to determine how safe you are from the risk of fire occurring in your home...

Questions

SMOKE ALARMS

1. Do you have working smoke alarm(s) fitted in your property? Yes No

- **With working batteries**
- **Regularly tested**

YES:

- You are twice as likely to survive a fire in your home if you have working smoke alarms fitted in the correct places.
- Most fires start at night. If you are asleep and you don't have a smoke alarm, your chances of survival are poor.
- A smoke alarm could save your life, as it provides a vital early warning and extra time if there is a fire. Consider replacing older alarms with 10-year alarms.

NO:

- You are twice as likely to die in a fire if you don't have working smoke alarms correctly fitted in your property.
- If you are asleep and a fire starts in your home, you have no way of knowing until it's too late; you may find yourself trapped.
- 20% of fires that start in the home have a smoke alarm without a battery fitted. Consider replacing older alarms with 10-year alarms.

2. If you have smoke alarm(s) are they in the correct positions? Yes No

Your smoke alarms should be:

- Fitted on every floor level of your home.
- On the ceiling, in the middle of the room, or on the hallway and landing.

YES:

- Check to ensure smoke alarms are positioned so they can be heard throughout your home.
- Use the information above to help you install any new smoke alarms.
- Don't fit smoke alarms next to kitchens or bathrooms where smoke or steam can set them off by accident.

NO:

- Ensure smoke alarms can be heard from every room in the house.
- If you can't hear your smoke alarm you may not be able to escape.
- Smoke alarms fitted in the wrong places, i.e. kitchen and bathrooms often cause people to remove their batteries, rendering them useless.

3. Do you test your smoke alarm(s) weekly? Yes No

YES:

- By testing your smoke alarm weekly you greatly increase your chances of survival if there is a fire in your home.
- Testing your smoke alarm as part of your regular routine will help ensure you don't forget to do it.
- If your smoke alarm starts to beep on a regular basis you need to replace the battery immediately.

NO:

- 90 people die each year because the battery in their smoke alarm was flat or missing.
- Test your smoke alarm by pressing the button until the alarm sounds. If it doesn't you need to replace the battery.
- If your smoke alarm starts to beep on a regular basis you need to replace the battery immediately.

KITCHEN SAFETY

4. When cooking with hot oils, do you follow safety advice? Yes No

- **Do not over fill the pan, maximum one third full**
- **Never leave the pan unattended**

YES:

- Over 50% of fires in the home are caused by cooking accidents.
- Most fires in the home start because of distractions or carelessness.
- If you discover a fire in your kitchen "Get out. Stay out. Call the Fire Service out."

NO:

- Never over fill the pan more than one third full or leave the pan unattended. Distraction or carelessness are the main reasons fires start in the home.
- If the pan catches fire don't throw water over it. Turn off the heat if it's safe to do so, close the kitchen door behind you, raise the alarm and "Get out. Stay out. Call the Fire Service out."
- Over 50% of fires in the home are caused by cooking accidents.

5. Are the access and exit clear in case immediate escape is required? Yes No

YES:

- Don't try to tackle the fire yourself, get out as safely and quickly as you can alerting others as you leave.
- Over 20 people a day are injured or killed in kitchen fires in the UK.

NO:

- Over 20 people a day are injured or killed in kitchen fires in the UK.
- Blocked escape routes can cost vital seconds. Ensure you can escape quickly in case of an emergency.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

6. Take time to check the items listed below. Are all your electrical equipment and cables in good condition? Yes No

- Cables: no bare wires or showing signs of wear.
- Damaged plug sockets: in good condition, not cracked or scorched.
- Extension leads: not overloaded or in excess of the maximum 13 amps.

YES:

- Check regularly for signs of dangerous or loose wiring such as scorch marks, hot plugs and sockets, or circuit breakers that trip for no obvious reasons, or flickering lights.
- Check that your sockets and extension leads aren't overloaded. Contact a qualified electrician if you are at all unsure.
- Certain appliances, such as washing machines, should have a single plug to themselves, as they are high powered.

NO:

- Worn or damaged cables or sockets may cause shorting and lead to ignition of combustible materials such as carpets, etc.
- Overloaded sockets and extension leads can overheat and start fires. Contact a qualified electrician if you are at all unsure.
- Never plug an extension lead into another extension lead.
- Avoid using an extension lead in a damp or wet room – kitchen, utility room, washroom, bathroom, etc.
- Certain appliances, such as washing machines, should have a single plug to themselves, as they are high powered.
- Always fully pull out cable from reeled extension leads to reduce overheating.

7. Do either of the following apply in your home? Yes No

- Electrical appliances turned off overnight or when out of the house.
- Electrical mains box or fuse box shows no signs of charring / overheating, or has combustible material in very close proximity.

YES:

- To reduce the risk of fire further, unplug appliances at night. This will help to reduce the risk of fire.
- Washing machines, tumble dryers, washer dryers and dishwashers account for 20% of all fires in the kitchen.
- Poorly maintained electrical intakes can lead to overheating and fires, so remove all combustibles nearby to limit the spread of fire.

NO:

- Washing machines, tumble dryers, washer dryers and dishwashers account for 20% of all fires in the kitchen, turn them off over night or when out of the house.
- Poorly maintained electrical intakes can lead to overheating and fires, so remove all combustibles nearby to limit fire spread.
- Unplugging appliances when not in use, overnight or when you are out helps to reduce the risk of fire.

OTHER FIRE RISKS

8. If you use electric blankets, are they in good condition? Yes No

Check for:

- Fraying fabric
- Scorch marks
- Exposed elements
- Creasing or folding
- Damp patches
- Worn lead
- Loose connection.

YES:

- Get your blanket tested by an expert every 3 years. For details of who can test it contact your council's Trading Standards Department.
- Replace your electric blanket every 10 years.
- Unplug blankets before you go to bed, unless it has a thermostat control for safe all-night use.

NO:

- Do not use electric blankets which have any signs of wear or damage.
- Never buy a secondhand blanket and look out for the British or European safety mark.

- Store blankets rolled up, preferably in the original box. Never store them folded. Do not place objects on top of blankets being stored.
- Get your blankets tested by an expert every 3 years, and replace it every 10 years. For details of who can test it contact your council's Trading Standards Department.

9. If you use candles in your home do you follow the advice below? Yes No

- Never leave candles or oil burners unattended
- Always place candles in / on a proper candle holder
- Always extinguish candles fully before going to bed
- Never place tea lights on flammable objects, as the aluminium base can get very hot.

YES:

- Remember to place candles on a heat resistant surface. Night lights and tea lights can melt plastic surfaces, such as the top of a TV or the side of a bath tub.

NO:

- Always place candles on a heat resistant surface. Night lights and tea lights can melt plastic surfaces, such as the top of a TV and the side of a bath tub.
- Never place candles under shelves or other combustible surfaces.
- Extinguish the candle before it burns into the holder.

10. Are portable heaters used safely in your home? Yes No

- Positioned away from flammable materials
- Switched off when unattended

YES:

- Check cables are in good condition.
- Place well away from furniture before use.
- Don't dry clothes near electric bar type fires or portable gas heaters.
- Switch off before you go to bed.

NO:

- Check cables are in good condition.
- Don't dry clothes near electric bar type fires or portable gas heaters.
- Switch off before you go to bed.
- Keep portable heaters well away from furniture and other flammable items.

11. If you smoke do you make sure you...? Yes No

- Always extinguish your cigarette in a proper ashtray – glass, ceramic, etc.
- Never smoke whilst feeling tired or in bed. Falling asleep whilst smoking may lead to a fire.

YES:

- Before emptying the ashtray ensure the contents are cold and all smoking materials extinguished. Dispose of contents in an outside bin.
- Always extinguish cigarettes carefully before going to bed.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.

NO:

- Fires started by cigarettes kill more people than any other kinds of fires, accounting for 1 in 3 fatal fires.
- Before emptying the ashtray ensure contents are cold and all smoking materials extinguished. Dispose of contents in an outside bin.
- Always extinguish cigarettes before going to bed.

MAKING AN ESCAPE PLAN

12. In an emergency, do you know how to get out of the house? Yes No

YES:

- Plan your escape route now! Involve the whole family so everyone is aware, including overnight visitors. This is normally your usual exit route – the hall, stairs and landing, but it may be different according to the layout of the house.
- Plan an additional route out of the house in case your main route is blocked.
- Always keep your escape routes clear of obstructions, don't leave items on stairs or in doorways.
- Keep keys to doors and windows handy (but securely) where everyone can access them.
- Take your mobile phone to bed with you. Keep it charged. It could be useful for calling emergency services if you are unable to get out of the room.

NO:

- Plan your escape route now! Involve the whole family so everyone is aware, including overnight visitors. This is normally your usual exit route – the hall, stairs and landing, but it may be different according to the layout of the house.
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NIGHT TIME ROUTINE

13. Do you have a night time safety routine? Yes No

YES:

- Close all doors.
- Switch off unnecessary appliances.
- Extinguish cigarettes and empty ashtrays into outside bins.
- Keep keys where they can be easily found in case of emergency.
- Take a mobile phone to bed, but do not charge it when asleep.

NO:

- Close all doors.
- Switch off unnecessary appliances.
- Extinguish cigarettes and empty ashtrays into outside bins.
- Keep keys where they can be easily found in case of emergency.
- Take a mobile phone to bed, but do not charge it when asleep.

WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A FIRE

14. Do you know what to do if there is a fire? Yes No

YES:

GET OUT

- Alert everyone and where possible get out together.
- Don't waste time collecting valuables / pets.
- Check ALL doors before you open them by feeling them with the BACK of your hand. If the door is warm the fire is on the other side. DON'T open it.

STAY OUT

- If anyone fails to leave your property DO NOT attempt to rescue them, if you go back in the property it will slow the fire crews as they will have an additional person to rescue – YOU!
- Wait near to your property and inform the fire crews exactly where you last saw the missing person.
- Don't attempt to rescue belongings / pets.

CALL THE FIRE SERVICE OUT

- Dial 999 and ask for FIRE.
- Speak slowly and clearly and give your address.
- If everyone is not out of the property let the operator know. (...continued)

IF UNABLE TO ESCAPE

- Attempt to dial 999 – give the operator your address and tell them you are trapped.
- Put something at the bottom of the door to stop smoke entering your room.
- If the room is filling with smoke stay near the floor as that is where the pure air is.
- Move to the window and open it and put something out of it to let the fire crew know where you are.
- Shout FIRE!

NO:

GET OUT

- Alert everyone and where possible get out together.
- Don't waste time collecting valuables / pets.
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- Shout FIRE!

Calculate Your Fire Risk

For your Fire Risk check score, count how many “No’s” you have ticked.

0

Well done, keep checking your property and testing your smoke alarms. By maintaining this level you are at a significantly reduced risk of having a fire in your home.

1 to 3

Be careful! You are at risk in some areas, please check the questions where you answered “no” and click on additional information.

4 to 7

Warning! You are at risk in many areas, please check the questions where you answered “no” and click on additional information.

Over 7

Take action immediately! Please read through the additional information provided and take action now. If you haven't already installed one fit an appropriately placed working smoke alarm as soon as possible to provide early warning of fire.