Fire Safety in the home



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In 2019 there was 16 lives lost from fires in the home. A home can be consumed by flames in less than four minutes. Small fires can get out of control in less than 30 seconds so time is not on your sides (www.housing.gov.ie). It is so important that your home is fully adapted for fire safety and that you and your family are fully aware of what to do the event of an emergency. Teach your household about the danger of fires and practice your fire escape plan. In this article we give you our guide to fire safety in the home.

Fire safety is broken into three categories:

1. Prevention
2. Detection
3. Evacuation

1. Preventing a fire

The best way to avoid fires happening is prevention. Being educated and prepared, creating good habits and safe practices can help reduce the risk of fire. Almost all fires have a detectable and preventable cause. The Department of Housing state that *"careless attention to or use of cigarettes lighters and matches, smoking, electricity, fireplaces, heaters, candles and cooking equipment are leading causes of fire-death and injury"*.

The following do's and don'ts will help you prevent a fire starting in your home, and may even save lives.

Don'ts

- Smoke when you are tired or in bed.
- Leave children alone near an open fire.
- Leave matches or lighters within reach of children.

- Leave candles unattended.
- Overload electrical sockets; one socket = one plug.
- Dry clothes on a heater or cooker.
- Light a solid fuel stove by petrol or paraffin.
- Leave a chip pan unattended.
- Leave electrical items such as your mobile phone or tablet plugged in or on charge all night as you sleep

Do

- Keep a working smoke alarm on every floor of your home and check their batteries regularly.
- Have a fire extinguisher and fire blanket in your kitchen and ensure that everyone knows how to use them.
- Have an escape ladder for in the event that your usual escape routes are unsafe.
- Use a fire guard with open fires.
- Use proper holders for candles.
- Replace or repair faulty electrical appliances immediately.
- A safety check before you go to bed.
- Keep aerosols like hairspray and deodorant away from heat sources such as radiators or direct sunlight.
- Get your chimney cleaned regularly depending on the type of fuel you use.

2. Detecting a fire

The majority of domestic fires happen at night while people are sleeping. When you are asleep your sense of smell decreases to almost non-existent. Smoke from a fire will not wake you up, in fact it will cause you to go into an even deeper sleep. It takes just 3 minutes for irreversible damage to occur as a result of smoke inhalation. If a fire does start, early detection will save lives. You only have minutes to escape from a house fire so every second counts. Smoke is dark, fast, toxic and hot. Most fire related deaths are caused by the inhalation of smoke. Smoke alarms give you advance warning of fire thus giving you more time to react.

Smoke Alarms

- It is essential to fit a smoke alarm on every floor.
- For optimal protection it is advised to fit a smoke alarm in every room except the bathroom and kitchen.
- Test your smoke alarms once a week and change the batteries as required.
- Depending on the type of batteries you are using you may need to change the batteries every 6 months.
- Change the batteries as soon as you hear the warning beep.
- Replace smoke alarms that are more than 10 years old.
- Ensure that your smoke alarms are kept dust free, get into the habit of hovering them regularly.



3. Evacuation

Having a set fire escape plan for when your smoke alarm sounds is so important. Identify an escape route and make sure that everyone in your household knows what to do. Make sure they all know that speed is of the essence.

Creating an evacuation plan

- Plan at least two escape routes from your home, in case one way is blocked by fire.
- With a two-story house think about how you would escape from upstairs. One solution is to invest in an escape ladder and store it in the room that offers the best exit route from a window.
- Have a plan in the event that escaping is not possible. Pick a room where everyone should gather and wait to be rescued. Close the door, seal the bottom with blankets or towels stop harmful smoke getting in

to the room.

- When escaping stay low to the ground as the smoke will be less dense there.
- In the event of a fire in your home test the door handles on your escape route with the back of your hand before entering. If the handle is warm it's likely that the fire is in this room and is blocking your route.
- If your clothes catch fire remember to stop, drop, wrap and roll.
- Choose a safe meeting outside the house and check that everyone is accounted for.
- Call 999 or 112 and tell the operator what service you require, give them your address and your phone number; do not hang up until the operator tells you to.
- Under no circumstances should you re-enter a burning house for personal items.



Nightly Fire Safety Checks

Get into the routine of doing a fire safety check every night before going to bed. It will only takes a few minutes and could be the difference between life and death. Here are some steps to follow:

- Place a spark guard in front of an open fire
- Put out candles and naked flames
- Empty all ashtrays
- Keep your way out completely clear
- Turn off all gas appliances
- Switch off all plugs, do not leave appliances charging overnight
- Leave a key in the door so you do not have to fumble to find keys in event of emergency
- Close all doors tight

Knowing about fire safety in the home, having an evacuation plan and practicing good prevention habits in your home will help to keep your family safe from fire.

Please note this information provided by Donegal Safety Services Ltd is basic and shortened. Donegal Safety Services Ltd is not responsible or liable for any actions taken based on this information. To make detailed decisions about your fire safety provisions, you might require further advice or need to consult the full standards and legislation. Any changes made to standards of legalisation following article date will not have been considered.

Donegal Safety Services offer a Fire Awareness Courses and Fire Warden courses, you can view the content of these courses by ***clicking here.***