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# Fire Safety

## in Council Houses and Bungalows

**Epping Forest District Council has worked with Essex County Fire & Rescue Service to produce this information for residents to ensure safety in the event of a fire.**





## Fire safety in your home

Fire is one of the biggest killers in the home. It is important for your own safety to understand what to do in the event of a fire.

There are many simple measures you can take to help prevent a fire in your home. The following advice can help to keep you and your visitors safe.

### Fire action advice

#### **If there is a fire in your home:**

- Get out and stay out taking all other occupants with you.
- Call the Fire Service on 999.
- Do not take risks.
- Close all doors and windows behind you as you leave, if safe to do so, to contain the fire.
- Walk calmly through the nearest exit and wait in a safe position away from the building.
- Do not return to your property until you have been told it is safe to do so by the Fire Service.

#### **If you are trapped in your home by a fire:**

- If a smoke alarm sounds do not open any doors that feel warm.
- Get everyone into one room that is furthest away from the smoke and heat in your property and close the door.
- Call the Fire Service on 999.
- Do not take risks.
- Block the bottom of the door(s) with blankets, coats or wet towels if possible.
- If you are near the window, open it to get air and to let the Fire Service see you.

## Smoke alarms

**Smoke alarms save lives. They are warning devices that detect the early stages of a fire. If there is a fire in your home, the smoke alarm sounds a piercing alarm to warn you, giving you vital extra time to escape.**



**You should test your alarms on a weekly basis to ensure they are working properly. Report any faults immediately to the Housing Repairs Service on 01992 564199 (please choose Option 1).**

**NEVER** disconnect or remove your smoke alarm.

**NEVER** cover the detector.

**NEVER** remove the batteries unless you are replacing them immediately (they need replacing every year).

There have been some instances whereby, for various reasons, residents have removed the whole smoke-detector unit from the mains supply. This renders the alarm useless and places them and others at risk. Smoke alarms should be tested, not removed.

If you have an individual gas boiler in your property, the Council will test your smoke alarm for free when the gas boiler is serviced. It is important you arrange access for this annual test and service promptly.

**If your smoke alarm sounds,  
never assume  
it is a false alarm.**

## Preventing fires

### Follow these tips to help prevent fires in your home:

- Ensure cigarettes are put out properly - more people die in fires caused by smoking and smoking related products than in fires caused by anything else; better still, go outside to smoke.
- Use candles carefully and make sure they are in a fireproof holder kept away from children, pets, curtains or paper.
- Chip pans cause a fifth of all accidental fires in the home - try to avoid cooking with chip pans. If using a chip pan never fill more than 1/3 full. Never leave them unattended, even if the doorbell rings.
- Microwave cooking – always check the packaging of ready meals as some may use foil containers which are not suitable for heating in a microwave.
- Poorly wired appliances are a real danger - check regularly that wiring is in good condition.
- Electrical sockets – do not overload plug sockets.
- Put all rubbish in the external bins provided. Bulky items can be removed by the Council. You can book your bulky item collection at [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk).
- If you have a gas boiler, make sure the Council's Gas Safe registered engineer is given access to service it once a year. Remember, they will test your smoke alarm for free at the same time.
- If you have a barbecue, ensure you place it well away from your property or anything that could catch fire. Have a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergencies.



**When buying or replacing furniture make sure it contains fire retardant foam rather than polyurethane foam.**

## Electric blankets

About 5,000 fires a year are caused by old or faulty electric blankets.

Make sure your blanket is safe. All electric blankets should carry the British Standard Kitemark (BSK) and the British Electrotechnical Approvals Board (BEAB) symbol on them. Have your blanket checked by an expert once every three years, or as recommended by the manufacturer. Essex Trading Standards will test your blanket free of charge.

Never use hot water bottles in the same bed as an electric blanket, even if the blanket is switched off. Water and electricity do not mix.



## Fire at night

You are more at risk from a fire when asleep. If you do not have a working smoke alarm, there will be nothing to wake you.

Know your escape route in case you need to use it in the night and close your internal doors before going to bed.



### Things to check at night before you go to bed:

- Close all internal doors, especially the kitchen door, to stop a fire spreading.
- Switch off electrical heaters, blankets, TVs and other items that do not need to run all night.
- Put out cigarettes and any candles safely.
- Make sure exits are clear.
- Keep door and window keys where everybody can find them.



## Fire safety in the garden



Barbecues and bonfires are very common in the summer but they can get out of control very quickly.

### **If you do have them please follow this safety advice:**

- Site any barbecue or bonfire well away from buildings, fences, trees and garden structures.
- Have a garden hose and bucket of sand to hand in case the fire starts to get out of control.
- Do not light a barbecue or bonfire on a windy day, as it could flare up more than you expect.
- Be courteous to your neighbours – if you are planning a barbecue or bonfire, let them know and stay with it at all times to ensure that it remains safe.
- Never use flammable liquids such as petrol or paraffin to start a barbecue.
- There are laws for the nuisance that bonfires can cause. You can get rid of household or garden waste by composting or recycling it. You cannot burn household waste if it will cause pollution or harm to people's health.
- Keep children and pets away from the fire.

## Storage

Your storage solution should not increase fire risks.

The Fire Service are experiencing serious fires, injuries and deaths as a result of excessive accumulation of materials in homes.

Storing too many possessions in your home poses a significant threat to Fire Officers fighting fires and can also increase the risk of fire spreading to your neighbours' homes. So, if you feel you have too much clutter, have a clear out - your home will be safer for it.



## Think ahead

- Prepare your fire escape plan - practising a plan of action will help you to act quickly if there is a fire. Everyone who lives in your home should know this plan.
- The best escape route is the normal way in and out of your home so make sure it is always kept free of obstacles.
- Think of a second route in case the first route is blocked and review your plan if the layout of your home changes.
- If there are children, older or disabled people or pets in your household, plan how they will get out.
- Think of, and plan for, any difficulties you may have getting out. For example, at night you may need to use a torch to light your way.
- Decide where the keys to doors and windows should be kept and always keep them there. Make sure everyone in your household knows where they are.
- Whenever you leave your property ensure that you have not left anything on charge or standby and check that your cooker and heaters are turned off.
- Consider purchasing a fire blanket for the kitchen as kitchen fires can devastate homes. Fire blankets are readily available and can extinguish small fires before they take hold.
- Do not park in a way that would block access to your home, causing a problem for the Emergency Services to enter.

**Remember, if you know of a disabled or vulnerable neighbour, please ensure you notify a Fire Officer immediately on their arrival.**

## Book a home safety visit

You can find more home fire safety guidance on the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service website; [www.essex-fire.gov.uk](http://www.essex-fire.gov.uk)

They also offer a free home fire safety visit for people living in Essex. Uniformed officers will visit your home to provide information and answer your questions about fire safety.

To arrange a free visit call 0300 303 0088 or visit the website and book online.



**Call the Fire Service on 999.  
Never assume that someone has already done it.  
You could save lives.**





**If you need this document in an alternative format contact:  
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