

# Is your home at risk of fire?

Information for residents



# Is your home at risk of fire?

The London Fire Brigade (LFB) offers free home fire safety visits to assess your risk.

## What is a home fire safety visit?

The LFB will visit you at home to offer advice on how to make your home safe and where appropriate, fit a smoke alarm for free. Strobe light

and vibrating-pad smoke alarms are available for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

## Who is eligible?

We target our visits at people and places where we know there is a higher risk of fire. This includes high risk individuals such as older people, especially those living alone, those with mobility, vision and

hearing impairment, mental health services users and those liable to intoxication through alcohol/drug use. A combination of these factors will significantly increase the risk from fire.

## Why request a visit?

If you are concerned that your home may be at risk of fire or know someone

who you think needs help then please arrange a visit.

## How do I arrange a free fire safety visit?

Contact our Barnet Homes Contact Centre on Freephone **0800 389 5225**

and arrange through your Housing Officer

## What details do I need to arrange a visit?

- Name
- Address (House Number/Name, Street, Town, Postcode)
- Telephone Number (if applicable)
- Email/other contact no.
- Age Range
- Any significant issues (special needs such as; hearing difficulties, visual impairment, language, carer needed etc.)

# Smoking

## The most common cause of fire death in the home

Fires caused by smoking materials - including cigarettes, roll-ups, cigars and pipe tobacco - result in more deaths than any other type of fire.

Last year around three fires a day in London were linked to smoking and half of accidental fire deaths were related to careless disposal of cigarettes.



# How to prevent smoking related fires

- Never smoke in bed
- Don't smoke in a soft chair or sofa if you think you may fall asleep
- Take extra care when you're tired, taking prescription drugs, or if you've been drinking alcohol
- Use a proper ashtray that can't tip over and is made of a material that won't burn
- Make sure you have enough ashtrays to avoid any overflow
- Don't leave a lit cigarette, cigar, or pipe lying around
- Stub cigarettes out properly and always dispose of them carefully
- Make sure smoking materials are cold before emptying ashtrays
- preferably wet them before throwing them into a bin
- Only smoke legally manufactured cigarettes
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach and always buy child resistant lighters
- Never smoke if you use medical oxygen, or an air flow pressure relief mattress
- If you use paraffin-based emollient creams, ask for non-flammable alternatives
- Consider additional specialist equipment such as fire retardant bedding or nightwear

## Help to quit smoking

If you would like to quit smoking visit the "NHS smoke free" website ([nhs.uk/smokefree](https://nhs.uk/smokefree)) or your local GP.



# Cooking

## More fires and fire injuries are caused in the kitchen than anywhere else in the home

Around 60 per cent of accidental fires in the home start in the kitchen. Taking

a few simple measures can make all the difference.

### How to prevent cooking fires

- Avoid leaving cooking unattended
- Don't cook if you are tired, have been drinking alcohol or taking medication that might make you drowsy
- Take care not to lean over hot hobs and keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob
- Be careful to keep the oven, hob, cooker hood and grill clean to avoid a buildup of fat and grease, which could ignite and cause a fire
- Use spark devices to light gas cookers - they are much safer than matches or lighters as they don't have a naked flame
- Double check the cooker and hob are turned off when you've finished cooking
- Check toasters are clean and placed away from anything that can catch fire
- Never put anything metal in the microwave
- Never use a barbecue indoors or on a balcony - burning or smouldering fuel can cause carbon monoxide poisoning
- Supervise children and pets in the kitchen at all times and keep matches and saucepan handles out of reach

### If a pan catches fire

- Don't tackle the fire yourself and don't attempt to move the pan
- Never throw water over a fire as it could create a fireball
- Turn off the heat, but only if it is safe to do so
- Leave the room, close the door, shout a warning to others and call 999

## Deep fat frying

- Take care when cooking with hot oil - it can easily overheat and catch fire
  - Never fill a pan more than one-third full of fat or oil
  - Make sure food is dry before putting it in hot oil
  - If the oil starts to smoke, it's too hot. Turn off the heat and leave it to cool
  - Use an electronic deep fat fryer if possible - they have built-in thermostats to control the temperature
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# Candles and naked flames

## One of the biggest causes of fire within homes

Candles, incense and oil burners are one of the biggest causes of fire within

homes. Always keep an eye on these items to keep you and your home safe.

## Advice to keep you safe

- Always use a heat resistant holder on a stable surface, which won't be knocked over
- Tea lights can melt through plastic surfaces like a TV or bath
- Keep these items away from materials that may catch fire such as curtains, furniture, clothes and hair
- Make sure you put out any candles, incense and oil burners when you leave the room and especially before bed
- Keep candles and naked flames out of the reach of children and pets

# Portable heaters and open fires

## Heaters being placed too close to flammable materials cause several fires and deaths a year

It is important to stay safe while heating your home; depending on the type of heater in use, you should also be

aware of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

## Advice to keep you safe

- Keep heaters away from materials that may catch fire such as curtains, furniture, clothes and hair
- Keep out of reach of children and pets
- Do not use oil, paraffin or LPG heaters as these are additional fire risks and may release carbon monoxide gases.

Wolseley Group have issued a recall on 2kw electric heaters - branded 'Center', and with the specific product code: 105161. - These may have been provided by RHH as a temporary source of heating whilst repairs are effected, whilst these are often collected by engineers, some may have been 'gifted' to the resident.

**Call 0800 056 6855 or visit [plumbcenter.co.uk/product-recall](http://plumbcenter.co.uk/product-recall) for more information**

## Portable heaters and fires

- Secure heaters against a wall to stop them falling over, or fit wall-mounted heaters. Do not cover them.
- Keep heaters away from clothes, curtains and furniture
- Sit at least one metre away from a heater as it could set light to your clothes or chair, especially if you fall asleep
- Always turn off your heater and allow it to cool before moving it
- If you need to use additional heaters within your home, we recommend you use only electric heaters. Do not use LPG gas heaters, oil, paraffin or solid fuel heaters. All these increase the risk of fire, and may release carbon monoxide gases
- Do not leave portable electric heaters unattended.
- Electric heaters should be plugged directly into an electrical socket and not connected via an extension lead or splitter

## Open fires and log burners

- Keep chimneys and flues clean and well maintained
- Always have your chimney swept by a specialist - at least once a year for coal and twice a year if you are burning logs
- Make sure you use a fire guard to protect against flying sparks and hot embers
- Before you go to bed, ensure fires are under control and guarded or better still, put out
- Store logs away from burners because radiated heat can cause them to burn
- **Please contact us if you have an open fire, so that we can carry out a fire safety check, free of charge.**





# Electrics

## Electrical fires are common: know the limit

If you're having trouble paying your energy bills don't use candles or naked flames as a substitute for heating and lighting.

If you are unable to pay your gas or electric bill, please contact either your suppliers or our rental income team for advice.

## Many electrical fires can be avoided by following some simple actions:

- Don't use imitation electrical chargers as they may be unsafe
- Make sure electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark when you buy them
- Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order
- Unplugging appliances and chargers when you are not using them or when you go to bed helps reduce the risk of fire
- Hair straighteners can get extremely hot. Always switch them off and leave them to cool on a heatproof surface
- For plugs that do not come fitted to the appliance, always check you're using the right fuse
- Keep to one plug per socket
- If you use an adaptor, use a fused 'in line' type. The adaptor or extension lead will have a limit of how much power it can safely provide so be careful not to overload sockets
- If using a cable drum extension lead, it should be completely unwound to avoid overheating
- Remember: scorch marks, flickering lights, hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that trip for no obvious reasons could be signs of loose or dangerous wiring

Nearly one fire a day in London involves white goods. Most fires caused by these appliances are not down to the owner but by faults beyond the control of the householder. You can check if your white goods have been recalled by the manufacturer here:

**[london-fire.gov.uk/total-recalls-white-goods-campaign.asp](https://london-fire.gov.uk/total-recalls-white-goods-campaign.asp)**

## Using an electric blanket

- Store electric blankets flat, rolled up or loosely folded to prevent damaging the internal wiring
- Unplug blankets before you get into bed, unless it has a thermostat control for safe all-night use
- Never use an electric blanket if you have an air flow pressure relief mattress, or use paraffin based emollient creams. Ask for non-flammable alternatives instead
- Do not buy second-hand electric blankets
- Check regularly for wear and tear and replace your electric blanket every 10 years

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## Bedtime routine

### Many fire deaths happen at night when most people are sleeping

Working smoke alarms should wake you if a fire does break out but you can further reduce your risk by carrying out some simple checks before you go to bed.

- Close internal doors at night to stop a fire from spreading
- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on, such as fridges and freezers
- Do not leave electrical appliances such as mobile phones and tablet computers charging overnight
- Check your cooker is switched off
- Don't leave the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher on
- Turn portable heaters and gas fires off, rake out fires and put a fire guard in place
- Put candles, incense sticks and oil burners out and never leave them burning when you are asleep
- Make sure cigarettes are completely out - it's best to wet them to be sure
- Never smoke in bed
- Make sure escape routes are clear of anything that could slow you down in an emergency
- Keep door and window keys where everyone you live with can find them
- Ensure mobility aids are close to hand for those who require them
- Ensure your door keys are to hand in a familiar location.

# Your home

## Front entrance doors

Fires are more likely to start within a flat, so your entrance door plays a huge part in ensuring safety for you and everyone else in your block.

All Barnet Homes tenants will have had suitable front doors installed. You should ensure that any replacement of a front door to a flat or maisonette

should be carried out under the guidance of Building Control, due to the safety implications of doing such work.

You can find more information on fire-resisting doors at [firesafe.org.uk/fire-doors](https://firesafe.org.uk/fire-doors).

## Information for leaseholders

Under the terms of your lease, the front entrance door is your responsibility. You must have a suitable front door so that you and other residents in the block remain protected in the event of a fire in your block.

By law, the door must be self-closing and give an FD30S level of fire and smoke resistance. This means that it must be able to withstand a minimum of 30 minutes exposure to fire.

Any new or replacement doors within an existing block must meet current standards for fireresisting doors. These are either BS476-22 or BS EN1634 parts 1, 2 and 3. The main requirements of these standards are that:

- The door must have a mechanism so that it closes automatically. Fire doors are required to be fitted with either a jamb closer or an overhead door closer.
- The door, frame and furniture together must be capable of providing a minimum of 30 minutes fire and smoke resistance.
- The door needs to be fitted with special plastic seals that swell up with heat, called intumescent strips.
- Cold smoke seals must be fitted along the side and top edges of either the door or frame. These often look like brushes attached to the edges.

# Downlights

There is a huge difference between fire-rated and non-fire-rated downlights. It is important to be aware of the difference between the two before installing downlights, and ensure that you always install fire-rated downlights.

A fire-rated downlight seals off the hole that is cut into your ceiling when having downlights installed. An pad swells up when reaching certain temperatures which blocks the spread of fire. Without this protection in place, the fire simply comes through the hole and ignites quicker than ever as there is no fire protection in place.

When downlights are installed, a hole is cut into your ceiling. Ceilings are a natural fire barrier – but they must be

intact for this barrier to be effective.

Cutting a hole into your ceiling is like an open door inviting the fire to spread quickly to the floor below. Fitting a fire-rated downlight effectively seals this hole to prevent the fire spreading.

The rule of thumb is: The ceiling must be returned to the same level of integrity as it was before the downlights were installed. Your fire safety should not be compromised by having downlights installed.

If you have any queries, please contact us before making any changes. You should always contact Barnet Homes for permission before making any significant changes to your property.



# DIY

There are many ways which DIY can cause fire safety risks. These can range from fires ignited by blow torches involved in paint stripping, to drilling into live electrical cables or gas supply pipes. Following a few fire safety tips can help avoid turning your house into a DIY disaster area.

## DIY tips

- Check you have the correct tool for the job
- Ensure children and pets are safe, with obstructions removed from your workplace
- If you have to check or repair an electrical tool turn it off at the mains. Don't be tempted to cut corners because you are some distance from the power switch
- Always uncoil electrical extension cables fully, as these can overheat and cause a fire
- Never use multi-way adapters when working with high power tools
- Gas appliances should only be repaired by an approved contractor
- Flammable liquids should be used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, secured in containers and used in small quantities, well away from the house and other risks – e.g. naked flames, cigarettes or pilot lights
- Ventilate when using adhesives and flammable liquids by opening windows and doors and always ensure that no naked flames or power tools are close by
- If you spill a substance on your clothing or overalls remove them and clean them thoroughly
- Don't use electrical equipment in the garden when it is raining
- Don't leave electrical equipment plugged in whilst unattended
- Always check where electric wiring is running behind walls before attempting to drill holes
- Invest in a portable Residual Current Device (safety device that can save lives by instantly switching off power) for all those outside DIY jobs with electric tools
- Never attempt DIY electric wiring yourself anywhere in the home

For more information on fire safety visit the London Fire Brigade website at **[london-fire.gov.uk](http://london-fire.gov.uk)**.

# If your clothes catch fire

## Remember: stop, drop and roll

If your clothes catch fire, remember: stop, drop and roll. Don't run around, you'll make the flames worse.

Lie down and roll around. This makes it harder for the flames to spread.

If you are with someone whose clothes have caught fire, get them to stop, drop and roll; then smother the flames with a heavy material, like a coat or blanket.

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# If your escape is blocked

## What to do if you can't get out during a fire

- Find a safe room away from the fire, ideally one with a window that opens and access to a phone
- Close the door and put bedding or any soft materials around the bottom of the door to block the smoke
- Open the window and call for help
- If you have a phone, call 999 and ask for the fire brigade
- Be ready to describe where you are and the quickest way to reach you

# Carbon monoxide poisoning

## A silent killer that causes at least 50 deaths a year

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a highly poisonous substance produced by the incomplete burning of gas and Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG).

This happens when a gas appliance has been incorrectly fitted, badly repaired or poorly maintained. It can also occur if flues, chimneys or vents are blocked. Oil and solid fuels such as coal, wood, petrol and oil can also produce carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide is a silent killer with at least 50 deaths recorded nationally every year.

One of the most high profile CO incidents occurred in January 2013, when six young children were hospitalised after a woman used a barbecue indoors to dry her clothes.

## Carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms

Carbon monoxide poisoning can kill quickly. You cannot taste, see or smell CO but the symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Breathlessness
- Collapse
- Loss of consciousness

# Fitting a Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarm

Fit a CO alarm - available at a low cost from DIY stores, some supermarkets and direct from energy suppliers.

Barnet Homes have fitted CO alarms to our tenant homes that have a gas supply. If your CO alarm is missing or damaged, please contact us to arrange for it to be replaced.

If you are a leaseholder and have a gas supply in your flat, we would recommend you fit a CO alarm if you have not already done so.

When buying a CO alarm make sure

it meets current British Standards or European safety standards.

Look for alarms marked with the EN 50291 standard - this may be written as BS EN 50291 or EN 50291 - and that it has the CE mark on. Both of these markings should be visible on the packaging and product.

Remember to test your alarm regularly. If you are a Barnet Homes resident, we can send you a carbon monoxide alarm free of charge. Please contact us to request an alarm.

## How to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide alarms should be placed in rooms with fuel burning appliances, such as boilers in kitchens and fires in the lounge.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding positioning, testing and replacing the alarm.

- Ensure your home has enough ventilation and airbricks are not blocked
- Keep chimney flues free from blockages
- Never use a purpose-built or disposable barbecue indoors





# Escaping from a fire

## Make an escape plan and practice it regularly

If a fire starts inside your home the most important thing to remember is to get out, stay out and call 999.

If you live in a purpose-built maisonette or block of flats of any height, your escape plan needs to be different.

## Know your escape plan

- The best route is the normal way in and out of your home
- Plan for a second route in case the first one is blocked
- Keep door and window keys where everyone you live with can find them
- Make sure the way in and out of your home is kept clear of anything that may slow down your escape
- Review your plan if your circumstances change
- Make sure everyone that lives in the house knows the escape plan

## What to do if there is a fire in your home

- If your smoke alarm goes off, never assume it is a false alarm
- Shout out to alert others in the home
- Don't waste time investigating what's happened or rescuing valuables
- Don't put yourself and others in danger by tackling fires yourself
- Keep calm and get out
- Close doors behind you to slow down the spread of fire and smoke
- Before you open a door, check if it's warm with the back of your hand. If it is, don't open it, there may be fire on the other side
- If there's smoke, keep low
- Call 999 as soon as it is safe to do so
- Never go back into the building once you are safely outside

# Barbecue safety

## What chefs need to know

- Never use a barbecue indoors or on a balcony
- Make sure barbecues are placed on level ground where they will not tip over
- Keep barbecues away from your home, sheds, fences, garden furniture, trees, shrubs and tents
- Don't drink too much alcohol if you are in charge of the barbecue
- Don't put the barbecue where people have to squeeze past it
- Keep children, pets and garden games well away from the cooking area
- Never leave the barbecue unattended
- Follow the safety instructions provided with disposable barbecues
- Only use approved barbecue fuel or fire lighters - never use petrol or paraffin

## After you've cooked

- When you have finished cooking, make sure the barbecue is cool before you try to move it
- Empty the cold ash onto bare garden soil - never put it in the dustbin
- Where possible, keep a bucket of water, sand or a garden hose nearby for emergencies



## Tips for gas barbecues

- Take extra care when turning bottled gas barbecues on and off
- Make sure the controls and the gas cylinder valve are turned off before you change the cylinder
- Make sure all joints are tightened, safe and secure
- Change the gas cylinder in the open air
- When you have finished cooking, turn off the gas cylinder before the barbecue controls; this makes sure any leftover gas in the pipe is used up
- Store your gas cylinders outside and protected from frost and sunlight
- Never store gas cylinders under the stairs- if there is a fire they might explode and block your escape route
- If you think there might be a leak in the gas cylinder connections or pipe, brush soapy water over all of the joints and watch out for bubbles
- If you have a leaky joint, try to tighten it (but don't over tighten it) and test for bubbles again. If unsure do not use the barbecue - seek specialist advice



# barnet**homes** working together



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