

Preventing fires at home

Three out of four fires take place in housing. Fires are usually caused by carelessness, but technical faults are also a common cause of fire. Remember that it is always easier to prevent than to extinguish fires.



CAUSES OF FIRE IN THE HOME

ELECTRICAL FAULTS

Our homes contain many different types of electrical devices. These devices can cause fires due to overheating or inappropriate use. If you smell something odd or hear a noise from your electrical system, you should contact an electrician. When wiring and electrical devices need to be repaired, this work should always be carried out by an expert. However, routine measures can generally prevent an electrical fire. Always turn your television off with the set's on/off switch and don't let your tumble dryer, washing machine or dishwasher run while you are away or while you are sleeping.

Never dry clothing on a radiator or sauna stove. Get into the habit of pulling out the plug whenever you have finished using a toaster or iron. A circuit breaker is a good idea.

CANDLES AND OTHER NAKED FLAMES

Burning candles that have been forgotten cause many fires in our homes. Never place candles near curtains or on the television set. Make sure that candle holders are made of suitable materials, e.g. ceramic, glass or metal. Don't use wooden candle holders. Never leave a room with candles burning. Blow them out first.

Children have always been fascinated by fire. It is therefore important to teach children a healthy respect for fire. Never try to make a child frightened of fire – it will only make him or her more curious. Never leave children alone near burning candles or other naked flames.

SMOKING

Smoking is the most common cause of death from fire. It is not only dangerous to smoke in bed. It is just as dangerous to fall asleep while smoking in a chair or sofa. It is also important to wet the contents of ashtrays before emptying them.

KITCHENS CAN BE A FIRE HAZARD

Many fires start on the stove. Saucepans burning dry is a common cause of fire. Fats and oils start to burn at high temperatures, as does candle wax. For this reason, never leave anything boiling on the stove when you leave the kitchen.

A timer that cuts off the power to the cooker and coffee maker is a good idea. Another way of reducing the risk of fire in the kitchen is to keep your kitchen extractor fan as clean as possible because grease and soot catch fire very easily.

COMBUSTIBLE SUBSTANCES

Extremely combustible fluids include petrol, methylated spirit, paraffin and lighting fluid. Keep these liquids in suitable containers in places out of the reach of children.

Light barbecues, etc. using lighting fluid. Never use petrol or methylated spirit.

Never throw spray cans into a fire. They can explode! LPG is an extremely combustible gas, which is why it needs to be handled very carefully. Turn off the valve on the bottle when it is not being used. If you have LPG on your boat or in your caravan, it is important to check the connections, valves and tubing regularly for any damage.

ARSON

Arson is common in residential areas. The best way to prevent arson is to avoid storing combustible materials in stairwells or in other easily accessible locations. Also ensure that attics, cellars and garages are locked and make sure that the lighting is in working order. These measures make it more difficult for people to set fires.

FIRE SAFETY AIDS AND MEASURES

SMOKE DETECTORS

During fires, smoke is the most dangerous factor and which causes the most deaths. For this reason, obtain a smoke detector that wakes you up when it detects dangerous fumes. Test your smoke detectors regularly by pressing the test button. Read more about this in our good advice leaflet, 'Smoke detectors in homes'.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

A fire extinguisher is very useful for extinguishing fires quickly. Everyone in the family should be aware of how to use it and where it is located. Read more about fire extinguishers in our good advice leaflet, 'Choosing the right fire extinguisher'.

EVACUATION PLAN

Draw up an evacuation plan and involve your children in it. If at all possible, ensure that there are at least two evacuation routes for everyone in the family. Make sure that it is possible to evacuate if a fire starts in your home. This means that you should never have seven-pin tumbler locks on the inside! Post the evacuation plan where everyone can see it and decide on a meeting point outside the building. Improve the evacuation potential in single family homes by, for example, mounting a special ladder for evacuation.

Checklist – is your home safe?

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Remove combustible materials in the immediate vicinity of the stove. | <input type="checkbox"/> Extinguish candles when leaving a room. | <input type="checkbox"/> may cause a fire. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pull out coffee maker and toaster plugs. Install a timer. | <input type="checkbox"/> Contact an electrician for troubleshooting if fuses blow regularly. | <input type="checkbox"/> Is your kitchen extractor fan clean? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure that light bulbs are of the correct wattage and that no extension cords are caught. | <input type="checkbox"/> During thunderstorms, remove electrical flexes and aerial cables connected to your television. | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have smoke detectors and are they in working order? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Replace any faulty wall sockets and switches and tighten any loose screws. | <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure that your television set is in an open and well ventilated location. | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have fire extinguishers in your home? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do not place towels or other combustible materials to dry on electric radiators. | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove tablecloths, candles and other items from televisions. They | <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum behind refrigerators and freezers. |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that candle holders are located away from curtains and the like and check that the decorations on them cannot catch fire. |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Install a circuit breaker. |

IF YOU SEE A FIRE, ALWAYS RING 112

The Swedish Fire Protection Association is a membership organisation that works to promote fire safety in Sweden. We help private individuals, businesses and other organisations to take their own responsibility for fire safety through information and training initiatives. Telephone +46 (0)8-588 474 00. www.svbf.se