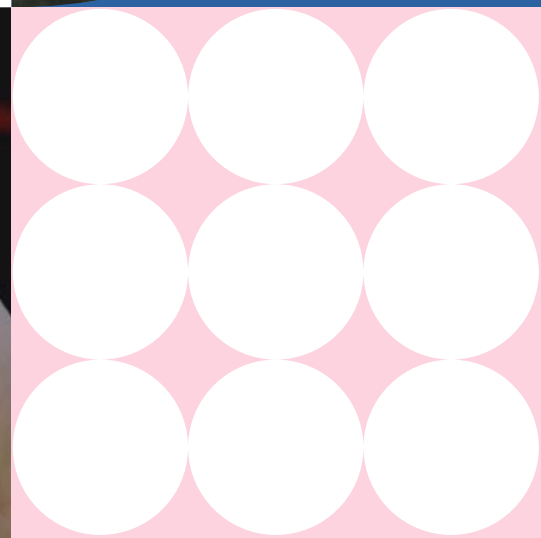


# Fire Awareness & Emergency Action



## Introduction

All volunteers and support providers should be made aware of, and instructed and trained to ensure that they understand the fire precautions applicable to the building and the action to be taken in the event of a fire. The aim should be to ensure that all volunteers and support providers received instruction appropriate to their responsibilities in the event of an emergency.

Homes in the community are not subject to inspections and registration but fire training is equally important. As a volunteer or support provider, it is your duty to read and understand your responsibilities in regard to fire awareness and emergency action.



## Fire Kills!

Each year 700 people die from fire in their own home. A further 14,000 are injured. The best way to avoid danger is to prevent fire starting in the first place.

### What is Fire?

Fire is a chemical reaction called combustion. For this to occur there needs to be fuel, oxygen and heat.

## Methods of Extinction

Break the Triangle of Fire - because 3 ingredients are necessary for fire, it follows logically that if one or more of these ingredients is removed the Fire will be extinguished

- Removal of heat: Cooling
- Removal of Fuel: Starving
- Removal or Limitation of Oxygen: Blanketing and smothering

## Four Fires

For all practical purposes there are 4 main classes of Fire: -

### Class A

Free burning fires in ordinary combustible materials such as wood, cloth, paper - cooling by water is the most effective way of extinguishing them. Risks are the building structure itself furniture, waste paper baskets, stationary stores.

### Class B

Flammable liquids such as oils, spirits, alcohols, greases and fats - here the smothering effect which excludes oxygen are the most effective - foam; CO<sub>2</sub>; and vaporising liquids also fire blankets to smother a fire effectively such as chip pan. Danger areas are kitchens, boiler houses, garages and spirit stores.

### Class C

Fire involving flammable gasses such as propane, Butane, North Sea gas and Town gas. Require CO<sub>2</sub> Dry powder and BCF. Risk areas are kitchens, workshops etc.

### Class D

Fire involving metals.

### Fires involving electrical risks

It is imperative to firstly disconnect the power supply the fire can then be dealt with according to the classification of the type of fire indicated above.



## Fire Extinguishers

Portable fire extinguishers are classified as first aid fire fighting and are designed for easy operating in an emergency. However it is important to realise that because they are portable they have only a limited duration of discharge. Therefore the siting of extinguishers together with an appreciation of their individual characteristics is fundamental to their success.

A fire that flares up quickly can be checked at the point of outbreak by prompt action. However if an extinguisher is badly sited and has to be brought some distance to cope with the outbreak even the smallest fire can become beyond the capability of the extinguisher.

Portable extinguishers provide the means whereby rapid action can be taken. It is essential that the right unit be sited in the correct position to deal with a particular type of fire hazard it may be useless and even dangerous to use the wrong kind of extinguisher on a fire.

## Before you Tackle a Fire

Many people put out small fires safely sadly however some people die or are injured by tackling a fire, which is beyond their capabilities. Here is a simple fire code to help you decide whether to put out or get out:

- Only tackle a fire in its early stages.
- Always put your own and other people's safety first. Make sure you can escape if you need to and never let a fire block your exit.
- Never tackle a fire if it's starting to spread or has spread to other items in the room or if the room is filling with smoke. Around 70% of the fire deaths are caused by people being overcome by smoke and fumes.
- If you cannot put out the fire or if the extinguisher becomes empty get out and get everyone else out of the building.

**It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the type of extinguishing agent used must be suited to the material involved.**

## Colour Coding

Fire extinguishers were identified by their colour cylinder but recently there has been a change and all new fire extinguishers will be red and have their identifying colour and name on the side. This will happen gradually as extinguishers are replaced so it will not be unusual for a while to see the old and new side by side.

## Fire Spreads VERY Quickly

Imagine leaving the living room to make a cup of coffee in the kitchen and a fire starts as you leave the room and shut the door. Within 1 minute, the smoke would be building and the temperature at about shoulder height would be about 200 degrees. In 2 minutes, the room would be nearly full of toxic black smoke and the temperature rising dramatically. And, within 3 and a half minutes, the room would be full of thick black toxic smoke and the temperature would have risen to 600 - 800 degrees and at 800 degrees flashover occurs. If you opened the door standing up you would not stand a chance.

## Smoke and Toxins

Any fire in a confined space creates a highly dangerous atmosphere that is low in oxygen and may be contaminated by carbon monoxide and toxic fumes. Modern day has filled the average home with a variety of materials (such as videos) that when burnt release deadly toxins into the air/smoke, toxins such as hydrochloric acid; sulphuric acid. One breath of hot toxic smoke could be enough to burn the throat and prevent another breath from being taken. Also the highly dangerous gas carbon monoxide prevents the blood from carrying oxygen. A large amount in the air can very quickly kill you. If you survive the toxic smoke could leave you unconscious and unable to escape the fire or with permanent lung and brain damage etc. Never enter a burning or fume filled building or open a door leading to a fire. Leave it to the Emergency Services.

## Preparing and Prevention

What should you do and not do to prevent a fire in your home? This will be the same in any home. Your client may not wish to take such precautions but it is your job to report any danger areas and keep your client informed and encourages them to follow fire safety.

- Think ahead and plan your escape route including alternative routes. Practice fire drill/talk through. Don't block fire exits.
- Ask questions - could I be trapped - has each room got a window you could open and climb through? Check if anything would hinder the escape
- Fit smoke alarms and ensure they are checked, maintained and positioned appropriately
- Telephone access
- Keep flammable liquids in shed or store only small amounts indoors in a well-ventilated cupboard away from doors or stairs
- Use guards for open fires and use a spark guard at night
- Sweep chimneys annually
- Maintain and or replace faulty wiring; broken plugs etc.
- Close all doors before going to bed. A door can hold back a fire for up to 30 minutes
- Buy fire retardant furnishings where possible
- Don't use polystyrene tiles in the kitchen and if using elsewhere stick them firmly on a bed of glue and use water based paint
- Don't hang mirrors over the fireplace
- Don't leave electric blanket on
- Don't place clothes horses too near fires or have papers piled up
- Don't leave the TV plugged in
- Don't leave cigarettes burning
- Don't overfill chip pans
- Avoid flapping curtains near cooker
- Don't overload power points or trail leads under carpets or rugs

## Roles and Actions

### Your role:

- Encourage fire safety awareness and practice
- Report/record any concerns
- Know your work area the fire exits (including reading care plan and discussed risk areas - plan escape/fire drill practice
- Follow safe working practices- unplug TV, close doors don't leave pans on cooker unattended.

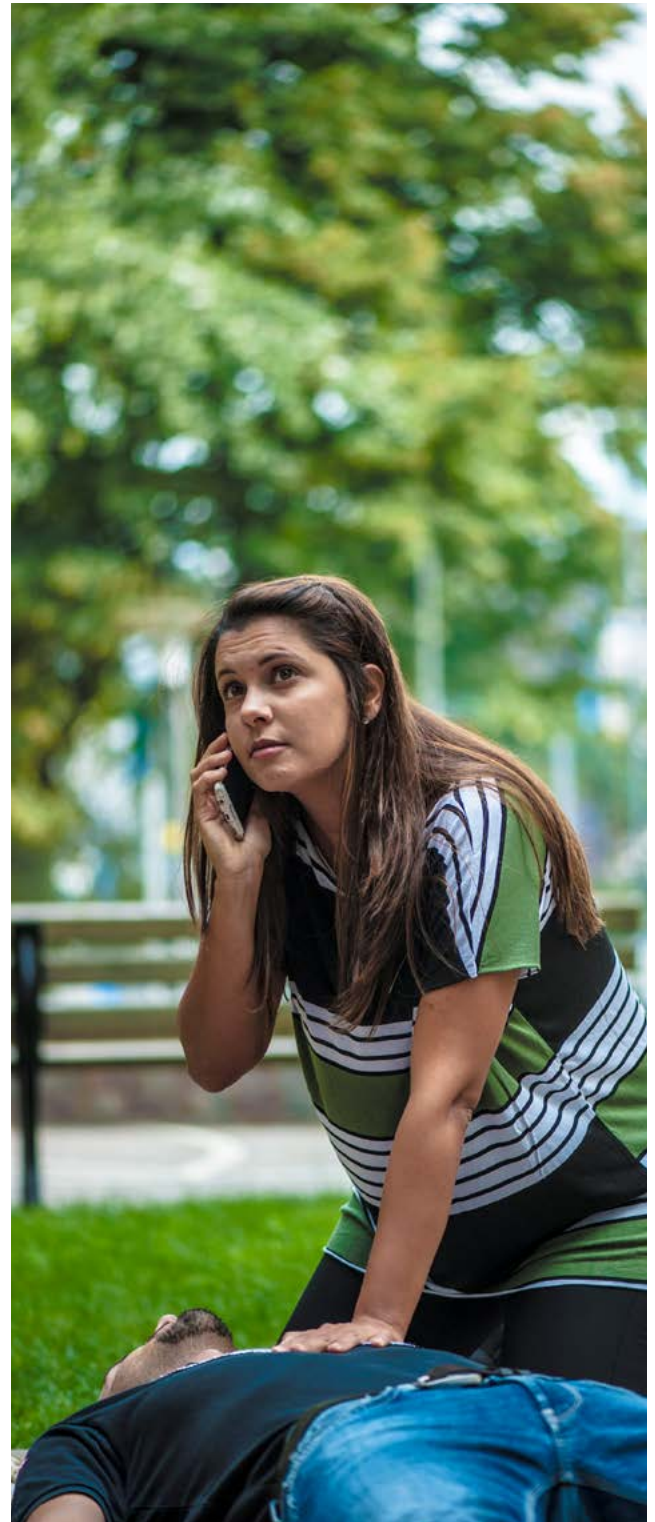
### What action should you take on discovering a fire?

- Raise the Alarm
- Inform the fire brigade
- Get out - evacuate occupants to a safe distance, leaving by the nearest exit
- Do not put yourself at risk in order to either extinguish a fire or rescue other people in the building
- Only tackle the fire if small in its very early stages
- Don't stop to pick up personal belongings
- Once out, stay out and be there to share information with the firemen such as if anyone is in the building and their location.

## Emergency Response

Telephone the Fire Brigade by dialling 999 and state:

- Which service you need
- Address and telephone including information such as whether a house or flat whether people in building
- Any additional information you feel may help e.g. gas involved, person trapped is disabled, house next to petrol station
- Stay calm. Take deep breaths and speak slowly and clearly
- Listen for confirmation that the operator has heard correctly - especially the address.





## Electricity

Risks associated with electricity:

- **Electric shocks** - When electricity passes through the body it causes a shock, burns and can kill
- **Fires** - Approximately 19% of all workplace fires are started by electrical appliances

## Safe use of Electricity

### Cables/Flex

Cables and flex wear with use and age. A frayed damaged cable or flex is a fire hazard and should be replaced. This should always be carried out by an expert.

### Turn off the power

Always make sure the power has been switched off before inserting a plug in a socket or remove it never put a plug into a socket when the power supply is in the on position you may get an electric shock. Always switch off and unplug electrical appliances before you clean them to avoid an electrical shock if you are changing ribbons or paper rolls on office machines make sure they have been isolated from the electrical supply before doing so. If switches plugs or sockets get hot turn off the power and have them checked they may be a fire hazard.

### Electricity and Water

Never touch light switches or handle electrical appliances with wet hands an appliance - safe in normal usage will become a lethal weapon if your hands are wet.

### Regular Inspections

It is a requirement for tools and electrical equipment to have regular inspection for faults by a qualified person, as should be all repair and maintenance.

## If You Suspect a Gas Leak

- Do not smoke
- Do not use a naked flame
- Do not turn electric switches on/off (the spark created in the socket can be enough to cause an explosion or fire)
- Open doors and windows
- Leave the house immediately and phone the National Gas Emergencies number on **0800 111 999** or call the emergency services on **999**.

### Gas Fire Action:

- Turn off the supply
- Don't try to extinguish the fire



This Fire Awareness and Emergency Action Guidance was prepared using content from Tribe partners Skills for Care. For more information about Skills for Care, please visit their website: [www.skillsforcare.org.uk](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)