



Electricity in the home. Guide to fire safety.

www.esc.org.uk




ELECTRICAL

SAFETY
COUNCIL

In 2005, government statistics showed that over 47,000 fires started by accident in UK homes were reported to the Fire and Rescue Service. A recent government survey of houses in England recognises that fires reported to the Fire and Rescue Service only represent about a quarter of all fires in homes.

Most of us take electricity for granted. We use it every day and forget that it can be dangerous if we do not treat it with respect. Of reported fires, **17%** are caused by electrical faults and a further **26%** are caused by people not using electrical equipment and appliances properly. So, it is important that we do all we can to reduce the risk of a fire in our home caused by an electrical problem.



By having the electrics in your home checked regularly and by taking some simple precautions when using electrical appliances, you can reduce the risk of fire.



Do

- **Do find out how old your wiring is**, and get the installation checked at least every 10 years and when you move into a new home. If you rent your home, the electrical installation and appliances provided are the landlord's responsibility. Ask to see a copy of the certificate or report confirming that the installation meets the UK national standard BS 7671 (Requirements for Electrical Installations) and is safe to use.
- **Do check your sockets regularly** – if you see burn marks or they feel hot, get a registered electrician to check if they need repairing or replacing.
- **Do turn off any electrical appliances** that you are not using, particularly at night, when a fire can spread quickly and cause more damage.
- **Do check flexible cables** to appliances regularly for damage, such as fraying and wear and tear to confirm that you can keep using them. Also check to see that the cable is fastened securely to the plug. You should always carry out these checks before you plug the appliance in.

- **Do be careful** when using hand-held electrical appliances and make sure that you switch them off and unplug them when you have finished using them. This is particularly important with items that get very hot such as hair dryers and curling tongs which, if you leave them on, can easily cause any flammable material that they are in contact with to catch fire.
- **Do check the current rating** of an electrical adaptor before you plug appliances in and always make sure that the total current used by the appliances are not more than the adaptor's rating.



Don't

- Don't overload electrical adaptors by plugging too many appliances in to one socket especially appliances with a high electrical current such as kettles, irons and heaters. It is much better to have extra sockets installed by a registered electrician.
- Don't put electric heaters near curtains or furniture, or dry clothes on them.
- Don't cover the air vents on storage heaters or fan heaters.
- Don't trail flexible cables under carpets or rugs.
- Don't use a bulb with a higher wattage than the one printed on the light fitting or lamp shade you are using.

Cooking appliances

Government statistics show that the largest number of reported fires caused by accident in the home, almost 12,000 each year, are caused by people misusing electrical cooking appliances, including microwaves. So you need to take special care to reduce the chance of a fire being caused by electrical appliances in your kitchen. You must:

- not let leads from other appliances like kettles or toasters trail across the cooker;
- never dry towels on, or near, the cooker;
- not let fat and grease build up on the cooker, especially in the grill pan where it can easily catch fire; and
- make sure that you turn the cooker off when you have finished using it.



Smoke Alarms

If a fire starts in your home, a smoke alarm will give you valuable time. Modern alarms are neat and tidy, and cost under £10. You don't need to be a DIY expert to fit one, and in certain circumstances your local fire brigade will install one for you, for free.

There are special alarms for elderly people, people with disabilities or other special needs. Your local fire brigade will be able to give you advice on what is available.

We work with Communities and Local Government and other organisations to try to reduce the number of accidental fires caused by electricity in homes. The Government is also running a 'Fire Kills' campaign, and has produced a number of useful fire safety leaflets which you can download at www.firekills.gov.uk/leaflets.

The Electrical Safety Council

18 Buckingham Gate, London, SW1E 6LB Phone: 0870 040 0561 Fax: 0870 040 0560
Email: enquiries@esc.org.uk Web: www.esc.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 257376

The Electrical Safety Council is an independent charity committed to reducing deaths and injuries through electrical accidents at home and at work.

