

Have you gone through your winter safety routine?

Seasonal advice from Dorset Fire & Rescue Service

Winter approaches and after a not so 'summery' summer we are no doubt preparing for colder weather to come..

It is this time of year when the central heating is turned back on, we get the electric blanket out of the cupboard, we prepare more hot meals and the festive season sees us using more candles and open fires. We also know that over the past months we have seen the cost of gas and electricity rise so the pennies don't go as far anymore. We are concerned that some may look to other means of keeping themselves warm and providing a light in the dark evenings and mornings.



For Dorset Fire & Rescue Service, 2008 has seen a terrible toll in fire related deaths. In the main these fires have tended to involve older people, often living alone, the majority have been smoking around the time of the fire whilst the others have seen electrical heaters or blankets as being the cause.



Many accidental fires in the home could be easily avoided if we spend a few minutes to think about our safety and that of our relatives, friends and neighbours. Being aware of the dangers of fire and taking simple preventative measures, could help save lives.

- **Smoking.** Always use proper ashtrays and ensure that cigarettes are put out properly! At night before going to bed empty the ashtrays outside preferably into a metal container. Do not smoke in bed and remember it is easy to be careless when you are tired or if you have been drinking.
- **Candles.** Always use a proper holder, Don't leave them unattended, position them away from curtains, and fabrics and any other combustible materials and where they can't be easily knocked over by pets. Ensure you put them out completely at night
- **Lights.** Use common sense and keep lights **away** from combustible items, like curtains and other fabrics. Check those Christmas lights and remember to turn them off when you go to bed.
- **Cooking** – (including chip pans and deep-frying). Never leave a saucepan on the heat if you are called away, keep the top of your cooker clean, keep toasters away from curtains. Make sure the Christmas roast is not the Christmas toast!!
- **Heaters and fires.** Always position heaters at least one metre (3 feet) from combustibles such as furniture, curtains or clothing. Always use a fireguard for open fires. If you use paraffin or flammable liquid fuelled heaters ensure that you store any fuel in small quantities and in containers only designed for flammable liquids in a secure area away from children, if possible in secure storage outside your premises. Do not attempt to refill any liquid fire whilst it is still turned on or hot.
- **Open Fires** – ensure that your chimney is cleaned especially if you have not lit an open fire for long period. Have your chimney cleaned on a regular basis, especially if burning logs or wood frequently.

- **Overloaded or faulty electrics.** Be careful not to over load sockets use the correct adaptor and fuse ratings. **Do not** plug an adaptor into adaptor. Always turn off electrical appliance's at the wall, and never repair damaged cables with insulating tape.
- **Electric blankets.** Have them checked at least once a year by a qualified electrician. Make sure that they are not rolled up whilst they are on.
- **CHECK YOUR SMOKE ALARM.** Check the battery is working by pressing the test button. This should be done weekly. Do not be tempted to disconnect or tamper with smoke alarms during Halloween or other festivities.
- **Check your family, friends and neighbours are safe.** Do they have a smoke alarm? Would they need help and assistance to be alerted to a fire or get to a place of safety if a fire did occur? If so let us know. Dorset Fire & Rescue Service carries out **FREE HOME SAFETY CHECKS.**

Fires strike when you least expect them, often during the night so ensure that you and your loved ones have an escape plan of what to do and where to go in the event of a fire. Be aware fire spread quickly but it is smoke that is the real killer. If you are asleep when a fire starts and you don't have an alarm to wake you, your chances of surviving are zero.



GET EQUIPED, Smoke alarms are a proven life saver, Dorset Fire & Rescue Service can offer a free home safe check to priority groups, if you have no smoke detectors we can install, free of charge, a 10 year smoke alarm. We can also test existing alarms and replace them if necessary. We can also provide alarms with strobe lighting and vibrating pads for people who are hard of hearing or deaf.

Finally if you are unfortunate to experience a fire in your home, **GET OUT, CALL US OUT, STAY OUT**

For further fire safety information visit www.dorsetfire.co.uk or if you would like to know more about free home fire safety checks please ring (01202 538282 or 01305 259660)

HAVE A SAFE WINTER

Nigel Williams
Deputy Chief Fire Officer