

Guidance

Fire safety for people with sight, hearing or mobility issues (accessible version)

Updated 10 August 2022

Applies to England

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-for-people-with-sight-hearing-or-mobility-difficulties/fire-safety-for-people-with-sight-hearing-or-mobility-issues-accessible-version>

This leaflet has been developed for people with sight, hearing and mobility issues and those who care for them. It provides practical advice and tips that will help protect you from the risk of fire.

Working smoke alarms save lives

Fit at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home.

Test your smoke alarms at least monthly. If you are unable to test the alarm yourself, ask a family member or friend to help with this.

Never disconnect them or take out the batteries if an alarm goes off by mistake.

You can even have linked alarms installed, so that when one alarm detects a fire, they all go off together.

If you can't fit alarms yourself, contact your local fire and rescue service who may be able to fit them for you.

You may contact any emergency service by emergency SMS text, this is a free service that you will need to pre-register to use.

Many fires in the home happen at night, so make sure you have an alarm in a position that will wake you up, such as in your bedroom.

Tips if you have hearing, sight or mobility difficulties

Hearing difficulties

If you have a hearing difficulty you can get a smoke alarm which uses a strobe light and vibrating pads.

Alternatively, consider linking smoke alarms so that when one goes off, they all go off.

In the event of a fire, if it is difficult for you to call 999 yourself, ask a neighbour to do it for you.

If you have specialist equipment, such as a text phone or minicom, you can contact the emergency services on 18000.

You may contact any emergency service by emergency SMS text, this is a free service that you will need to pre-register to use.

Sight difficulties

Put a coloured sticker on your smoke alarms if you have trouble seeing them to test them, or ask your local fire and rescue service if they can provide coloured covers.

Consider fitting bump-ons (also known as plastic blisters) to appliances as a way of making sure they are switched off properly.

Unplug and then check electrical leads regularly by touch. If they are frayed or faulty don't plug them in or switch them on. If electrics are giving off a burning smell turn them off and unplug them immediately.

You may also want to consider placing a tactile indicator along your escape route to make it easier to find the exit.

Mobility difficulties

If it is difficult to test your alarms ask somebody to do it for you. You can also get remote controlled or easy access alarms, which can be tested from the wall rather than the ceiling. The Disabled Living Foundation can provide more information on these products.

If you have trouble moving around, consider fitting an intercom which will allow you to alert someone in the event of an emergency.

Make sure you have easy access to any mobility aids you may need, such as a walking stick.

Take extra care if you smoke. Smoke outdoors and put cigarettes right out and never smoke in bed.

Further information and contact details for specialist support available can be found at the back of this leaflet

If you use oxygen

Make sure your oxygen equipment is stored safely out of direct sunlight, in a space that is well ventilated, always dry and away from heat sources.

Don't use oxygen near naked flames, including gas and electric cookers – 3 metres is a safe distance.

For further information, contact your oxygen supplier.

Never smoke or use electrical appliances such as hairdryers, whilst using oxygen.

If you use an electric blanket

Store electric blankets flat, rolled up or loosely folded to prevent damaging the internal wiring.

Water and electricity don't mix, so avoid getting an electric blanket wet. If you do, wait until it is completely dry before using it again.

Never use a hot water bottle and an electric blanket together.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Test electric blankets every three years. Your local fire and rescue service or Age UK may do this for you for free.

Plan an escape route

Think about all possible escape routes in case there's a fire.

It is a good idea to practise an escape so that you feel confident you could do it day or night.

Keep a phone in your bedroom in case you need to make an emergency call. If it's a mobile, keep it charged.

Make sure exits are kept clear and well lit.

Make sure you know how your house or personal alarm works, including any passwords or codes.

Keep keys where you can find them in case you need them in a hurry.

In the event of a fire

Don't tackle fires yourself. If you can, get out, stay out and call 999.

If you can't call 999 yourself get a neighbour to do it for you.

If you can't get out stay in a room with a shut door, window and phone, ideally at the front of the house.

Put bedding round the bottom of the door to block out the smoke, then open the window and shout "HELP FIRE". Keep a whistle handy if it's hard to shout.

If you can, close inside doors at night. This will help prevent a fire from spreading.

Support tailored to your needs

The numbers for your local fire and rescue service or Social Services can be found in the phone book, through directory enquiries or [on the GOV.UK website \(http://www.gov.uk/\)](http://www.gov.uk/).

Register with your local fire and rescue service if you have sight, hearing or mobility issues or if you use oxygen. This will mean a fire crew is made aware of your circumstances in the event of an emergency.

Contact your local fire and rescue service or Social Services if you need practical help tailored to meet your needs. They may be able to fit specialist smoke alarms for you or provide other safety equipment.

See the Fire Safety in the Home leaflet for further advice and top tips.

999 should only be used for real emergencies.

Make a bedtime check

You are more at risk from a fire when asleep. So it's a good idea to check your home before you go to bed.

Check list

Close inside doors at night to stop a fire from spreading.

Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on – like your freezer.

Check your cooker is turned off.

Don't run appliances such as washing machines, tumble dryers and dishwashers overnight.

Turn heaters off and put up fireguards.

Put candles and cigarettes out properly.

Make sure exits are kept clear.

Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them.

More information and support

Electric blanket testing or access to handymen

Age UK

Freephone 0800 678 1602

www.ageuk.org.uk (<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/>)

Free, impartial advice on disability and mobility products

Disabled Living Foundation

0300 999 0004

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk (<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/>)

info@dlf.org.uk

Specialist equipment and advice for blind and partially sighted people

RNIB

0303 123 9999

www.rnib.org.uk (<http://www.rnib.org.uk/>)

helpline@rnib.org.uk

Specialist equipment and advice for deaf and hard of hearing people

RNID

0808 808 0123

Textphone: 18001 0808 808 0123

www.rnid.org.uk (<http://www.rnid.org.uk/>)

Support for people who are deafblind

Sense

0300 330 9256

Textphone: 18001 0300 330 9256

www.sense.org.uk (<http://www.sense.org.uk/>)

Information and support for people who are disabled

Scope

0808 800 3333

www.scope.org.uk (<http://www.scope.org.uk/>)

Support for disabled people to live independently

Disability Rights UK

www.disabilityrightsuk.org (<http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/>)

Advice on fire prevention, including downloadable leaflets

Fire Kills

www.fireengland.uk/fire-safety (<http://www.fireengland.uk/fire-safety/>)

www.gov.uk/firekills (<http://www.gov.uk/firekills/>)

For advice specific to you and your home, [complete your own home fire safety check](http://www.ohfsc.co.uk) (<http://www.ohfsc.co.uk/>).

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