

HOW FIRE SAFE IS YOUR HOME?

This questionnaire helps you identify any fire risks in your home and provides advice on what you can do to reduce them.

Please tick the appropriate box or boxes

Your Dwelling

1. What sort of dwelling do you live in?

- A single-storey dwelling
- A multi-storey dwelling
- Other (please specify) _____

You don't know where a fire will start so you should have smoke alarms in every hallway, bedroom, living area and every level of your home.

2. What is most of your internal wall lining made of?

- Gibraltar board (e.g. such as GIB-board)
- Lathe and plaster
- Soft board
- Timber
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know

House fires can burn very quickly because of building and furnishing materials.

Did you know that plasterboard or gypsum board (e.g. GIB-board) provides better fire protection than most other wall linings, most of which can burn very quickly and fuel

3. Is your home rented or owner-occupied?

- Rented
- Owner-occupied
- Other (please specify)

If you have any concerns about fire safety contact your landlord.

4. Do you have dwelling (home owners) insurance?

- Yes
- No

Have you thought about what would happen if you had a fire in your home – could you afford to repair or rebuild? Where would you live in the meantime?

5. Do you have contents insurance?

- Yes
- No

Have you thought about what would happen if you lost your belongings in a fire – could you afford to replace them?

6. How would you describe the current condition of your dwelling?

- Excellent – no immediate repair and maintenance needed
- OK – minor or some maintenance needed
- Poor– Immediate and/or extensive repairs and maintenance needed

Houses in poor condition are at more risk from fire.

7. Has your dwelling had any significant renovations?

- Yes
- No

Did you know that scrim walls, large amounts of interior timber, pinex ceilings and other linings that are more common in older homes pose greater fire risk because they burn very quickly and fuel fires?

8. If so, what would best describe the status of that renovation?

- Completed
- Still underway

Is the area under renovation fire-safe? Are there exposed walls or wires? Would building materials block your exit in the case of a fire? Does your insurance policy require you to inform your insurance company that renovations are underway?

9. Do you have any outbuildings that are used for sleeping?

- Yes
- No

Outbuildings such as garages need smoke alarms or sprinklers if they are attached to the house or used as sleeping quarters. In many cases councils require permits/consents when you change the use of an outbuilding to a bedroom or living area. Check with your council about what you might need to do to bring the outbuilding up to a safe standard.

10. If yes, which of these statements best describes this outbuilding?

- Garage separate from the dwelling
- Garage attached to the dwelling
- Sleep out
- Caravan
- Other

Make sure you don't store flammable materials, like petrol, in areas where people sleep.

11. The colour of the covering on your electric wiring indicates the age of the wiring. What colour is most of the electric wire covering in your dwelling?

- Black
- White

If the covering is black, then your wiring is old. The black covering is probably deteriorating, exposing you to fire risk from faulty wiring.

12. How would you describe your meter box?

- Old-type fuse fittings (that is, with fuse wire)
- Modern with circuit breakers

Older fuse fitting do not provide you with the protection that newer circuit breakers do if you overload the system. You may be exposing your household to greater fire risk.

13. Are all your high wattage electrical appliances (e.g., microwave, heater, electric jug, toaster, hairdryer) each plugged into a separate wall socket?

- Yes
- No

Ensure all electric appliances are in safe working order – replace frayed cords and broken plugs and keep appliances free of dust. Overloaded power points or multi-boxes are dangerous. One appliance per socket is the safest. Consider multi-boxes with circuit breakers.
Avoid running power cords under carpets, especially in walking areas.

14. Which of these best describes the inside of your dwelling?

- Spacious with little clutter
- Cramped with clutter
- Spacious with clutter
- Cramped with little clutter

Household clutter could increase your fire risk. Clutter provides more fuel to feed a fire. If a fire starts, it will take hold and spread further and faster. And clutter might block your way when you try to escape a fire. Do not clutter your cooking area. For example, keep tea towels and cloths away from the stove.

15. Which of these things are near to or against the wall of your dwelling?

- Trees
- Vegetation (long grass, etc)
- Rubbish (papers, discarded Christmas trees, etc)
- Firewood
- Abandoned cars
- There is nothing against or close to the wall of the dwelling

Regularly clear away household rubbish and keep it well away from your house.
Ensure you dispose of your Christmas tree appropriately.
Don't leave it beside the house or garage.

Your Household

16. How many people live in your household (including on your property overall)?

Do you know where everyone sleeps? Most fires happen at night time. Would you know how many to check for, and where they all are, if a fire should occur?

17. Would you or anyone in your household (including on your property) fail to hear a smoke alarm if there was a fire?

- Yes
- No

Be aware of people's hearing ability. They may not hear an alarm if they are hard-of-hearing, naturally sleep deeply or do so because they are on medication or have been drinking. Check that all people are aware of a fire if an alarm sounds.

There are special smoke alarms available to assist those with hearing disabilities: ultra-loud sound, strobe light, vibrating pager or vibrating pad for under your pillow

18. Would you or anyone in your household (including on your property) not sense a fire (maybe because they don't have a good sense of smell, or have a hearing or seeing impairment)?

- Yes
- No

If you are asleep you are unlikely to smell smoke and detect a fire.
Fires start quickly and grow quickly.

Don't assume that all people will sense a fire – as part of your evacuation procedure check that all people know a fire has happened and that they need to escape.

19. Would you or anyone in your household (including on your property) need help to get out if there was a fire (maybe because they have a disability or an illness or would not know what to do)?

- Yes
- No

Work out an escape plan to suit your home and talk about it with everybody in the property. When a fire strikes, it spreads quickly giving you and your family less than four minutes to get out of the house safely. Tragically, children often perish in house fires because they hide in cupboards and under beds. People with physical, mental and other disabilities usually need help to respond to a fire appropriately. Make sure your escape plan includes working out who will provide help to whom. If you are older or have a disability here are some safety precautions. Sleep near an exit. If you live in a multi-storey building or have difficulty getting about, sleep on the ground floor. Keep a telephone (a whistle or alert bracelet) and torch by the bed.

20. Do you or anyone in your household smoke?

- Yes
- No

Ensure ashtrays are emptied into a metal bin outside. Remember that smoking in bed is dangerous and bedclothes ignite easily. Use a solid ashtray to stub out cigarette butts – soak butts in water before throwing them out.

21. If yes, have you noticed any burns marks or holes in any furnishings or clothes?

- Yes
- No

Check behind cushions for butts and ashes before going to bed

22. Does anyone in your household cook after (or while) drinking alcohol?

- Yes
- No

Cooking is the number one fire danger in your home. Never leave cooking unattended. A third of all fire deaths are caused by unattended cooking. Always watch the pan or pot when cooking with oil or fat. Don't cook when you've been drinking - get takeaways delivered instead. Alcohol is involved in 50% of all fatal house fires. Have a drink once you've sat down to eat. Never use water to put out an oil or fat fire. Instead turn off heat and snuff out smoke or fire with a pot lid or oven tray. Never carry it outside.

23. Does anyone in your household (including in sleep-outs, etc) use naked flames (e.g. candles, gas cookers, gas heaters)?

- Yes
- No

Use candles with care. Use candles in a secure candle holder with a wide flat base. Keep candles away from paper, curtains, bedclothes and anything else that will burn easily. Put candles out before you go to sleep or leave a room. Don't allow children to play with candles or be unsupervised in a room with a lit candle.

24. Do any children in your household show an interest in fire?

- Yes
- No

Children are most at risk of dying or being badly burned in a fire - often from playing with matches and lighters. Keep all matches and lighters up high, out of reach of children - they are tools not toys. Teach them to take matches or lighters to an adult straight away. Only use child restraint lighters and safety matches. Remember, child resistant lighters are NOT child proof! If you and your family could benefit from the Fire Awareness and Intervention Programme (which is aimed at children, parents and caregivers) contact your local fire station.

Heating your dwelling

25. Which of these do you use for heating?

- Electric fan heater
- Electric radiator (e.g. bar heater)
- Portable gas heater (e.g. LPG)
- Fixed gas heater (e.g. gas fan heater)
- Oil column
- Open fire
- Log or pellet burner
- Heat pump or central heating
- Electric blanket
- Other. Please specify _____

Remember to turn heaters off and keep furniture and clothes at least one metre from the heater or fire place.

You need to ensure your gas heater and gas bottle are serviced annually.

Always turn off your electric blanket at the wall before getting into bed. Have blankets checked annually by a competent service person.

26. If you use an open fire or a log or pellet burner, do you dispose of your ashes using a metal container and/or remove the ashes to a safe place away from the dwelling?

- Yes
- No

Ashes can take up to five days to cool. So when it's time to clean out the hearth or wood burner, place the ashes in a metal container, well clear of your home and pour water over them. Never place them in plastic, paper or wooden containers or with other rubbish if still warm.

27. If you have a log or pellet burner, is it in good working order?

- Yes
 No

Free standing wood burners and pellet burners may be durable for five years or less and in-built burners may be durable for 15 years or less (check the New Zealand Building Code). You need to get your burner checked for safety on a regular basis.

28. If you use an open fire or log or pellet burner, do you check and clean the chimney regularly?

- Yes
 No

If you have an open or solid fuel fire, you need to have the chimney cleaned at least twice a year.

29. Are there things (e.g., furniture, curtains) closer than a meter to your heater, open fire or log/pellet burner?

- Yes
 No

Remember the Heater-Metre rule. Keep children, furniture, clothing and anything else that could catch fire at least one metre from heaters and fire-places. Ensure you use a spark guard or fire screen with an open fire.

30. Does anyone in your household sit closer than a metre from the heater, open fire or log or pellet burner?

- Yes
 No

Remember the Heater-Metre rule. Keep children, furniture, clothing and anything else that could catch fire at least one metre from heaters and fire-places. Ensure you use a spark guard or fire screen with an open fire.

31. Does anyone in your household dry clothes in front of the open fire, log or pellet burner or heater?

- Yes
 No

Fire safety

32. Do you have smoke alarms installed in your home?

- Yes
 No

You're four times more likely to survive a fire if you have working smoke alarms in your home. Fires start quietly and grow quickly. Far more people die from being overcome by smoke than from flames. When you're asleep, you can't smell smoke. So a smoke alarm is a priceless early warning system. You don't know where a fire will start so you should have smoke alarms in every hallway, bedroom, living area and every level of your home. Install them on the ceiling as close to the centre of the room as possible. For more information about where to place smoke alarms check out <http://www.fire.org.nz/Fire-Safety/Fire-Safety-Advice/Pages/Inside-your-home.aspx>

33. If anyone in your home has a hearing impairment, do you have an alarm system for them?

- Yes
 No

There are special smoke alarms available to assist those with hearing impairments: ultra-loud sound, strobe light, vibrating pager or vibrating pad for under your pillow.

34. Do you test your smoke alarms regularly - to ensure they are in working order and to check the batteries?

- Yes
 No

Are your smoke alarms working? Dust can stop them working and cause nuisance false alarms. Gently dust the alarm with a vacuum cleaner brush every 6 months. Replace any smoke alarms that are not working or are over 10 years old. Test smoke alarms each month by pushing the test button to ensure it beeps (you may need to use a broom handle to reach it). Change the battery when the unit starts 'cheeping'. A good practice is to change your smoke alarm batteries when you change your clocks for daylight saving. The elderly are at far greater risk of having fire in their home than any other emergency (such as an intruder). Working smoke alarms could save their lives.

35. What additional fire protection equipment do you have?

- Sprinkler system
 Fire extinguisher
 Fire blanket
 Garden hose
 Other
 None

Fire is fast – home sprinklers and hardwired interconnected smoke alarms are effective and save lives. Sprinklers are a cost effective means of protecting a house from a serious fire. They can be installed in a number of ways including combining the home plumbing and fire sprinkler systems. If you have a fire extinguisher, do you know how to use it? There are many fire extinguisher training courses available. See <http://www.fire.org.nz/Fire-Safety/Fire-Safety-Advice/Pages/Inside-your-home.aspx> for more information. Also, keep your garden hose connected.

36. Do you have an escape plan in case of a fire in your dwelling?

- Yes
 No

Work out an escape plan to suit your place and talk about it with everybody in the house. Have a safe meeting place outside, such as a letter box or special tree. Get down, get low, get out – smoke is poisonous. Get underneath it by crawling along the floor to get out. Shut the doors behind you to stop the spread of fire. Get out and stay out – never go back inside. Shout Fire! Fire! Fire! to warn others. Gather at your planned meeting place. Phone 111 from a safe place – tell the operator your: house number, street, nearest intersection, suburb and city, or rural ID number if you have one. Wait for the Fire Service to arrive and tell them where the fire is and if anyone is still inside.

37. Do you have more than one way to get out of the dwelling in case of a fire?

- Yes
 No

You need to know two ways out of every room to escape from fire. Always keep keys in deadlocks when you are at home so that you can get out easily in a fire.

38. Have you practised the escape plan?

- Yes
 No

All your family needs to understand the escape plan. Every three to six months you need to practise escaping from each room in the house using both exits. Children easily get lost or disorientated in smoke. So can adults. A regularly practised escape plan can save lives. If a child has planned and practised an escape plan they are more likely to get out alive in a house fire.

39. Are all the ways out of your dwelling clear of furniture, toys and clutter?

- Yes
 No

Are the passageways clear for a quick escape? You need to make sure your exit doors and windows are easy to open and get through. Also, you need to make sure that there is a safe way to reach ground from any upper floors.

40. Do you do a fire check every night before you turn out the light e.g. turning off electrical appliances and clearing clutter from exit?

- Yes
 No

More than half of all fire deaths occur in homes, mainly while people are sleeping. A quick safety check (using the following questions) before you go to sleep can save you and your children's lives. Are kitchen appliances turned off? Are heaters turned off and furniture and clothes one metre from the heater or fire place? Has the ashtray been emptied into a metal bin outside? Have you disposed of your fire ashes appropriately? Have you switched the television off at the power switch on the set – and not on the remote control's 'standby'? Are all candles out before going to bed? Have you closed the kitchen and living room doors to slow a fire from spreading to bedrooms? Is the house secure with keys in deadlocks? Are the passageways clear for a quick escape? Have you turned off all electric blankets before getting into bed?

If you need any further information surrounding fire risk and safety please refer to the New Zealand Fire Service website <http://www.fire.org.nz>