



Make your home and family fire safe





The New Zealand Fire Service is called out to fires in homes – just like yours – on average every three hours.

Millions of dollars in property and possessions go up in smoke each year. The emotional cost is much more.

Don't let this happen to you.

We're passionate about fire safety even when we're not at work. That's why we're proud to feature photos of Fire Service personnel and their families in this booklet.

Make your home + family fire safe

Learn the fire safety basics.

- 1 Working smoke alarms save lives**
Install smoke alarms if you haven't already – and test them regularly.
- 2 Make an escape plan**
Drawing up an escape plan and practising it with your family WILL make all the difference.
- 3 Get out and stay out**
In a fire, get everybody out and call 111. And whatever you do, stay out.

FACT:

Two to three minutes is all it can take to lose your home and family to fire.

30
seconds



60
seconds



3
minutes



Modern homes and furnishings are made from products that are more flammable, and give off more poisonous smoke, than ever before.

This combination gives you very little time to escape if you have a fire, so you need as much advanced warning as possible. ”



It's critical you have working photoelectric smoke alarms installed. They are the single most important life-saving device in the home.

Your whole household should also know and regularly practise an escape plan. ”

Working smoke alarms save lives



Your best protection is to have photoelectric smoke alarms in every bedroom, living area and hallway in your home.

Install them in the middle of the ceiling of each room.”



- ▶ **If you can only afford** to buy one smoke alarm at a time, install it in the hallway closest to the bedrooms.
- ▶ **Do not install a smoke alarm in your kitchen** as smoke and heat from cooking (and the toaster) can activate the alarm. They shouldn't be installed in the bathroom, laundry or garage either.
- ▶ **Smoke alarms that are hard-wired** (connected to your home's electrical wiring – just like a light) are the best option. This way you'll never have the hassle of finding where the 'flat battery' beep is coming from at 4am in the morning. You will need a qualified electrician to do this for you.
- ▶ **The Fire Service recommends long-life, photoelectric** type smoke alarms. Your local hardware store should stock them. They may cost a little more, but they pay for themselves over their lifetime as you won't need to replace the batteries annually.
- ▶ **There are special smoke alarms** for people who have impaired hearing. Talk to your local deaf support organisation about this option.

Test your smoke alarms regularly



You should test your smoke alarms once a month.

The New Zealand Fire Service recommends long-life photoelectric smoke alarms. They are guaranteed to provide 10 years of smoke detection. And photoelectric alarms more quickly detect most types of fires.”



In 80% of fires the Fire Service attends, smoke alarms are either not installed or not working.

- ▶ **To check your smoke alarm** is working, press the test button. If all is OK, you will hear a loud beep or series of beeps. Use a broom handle if your smoke alarm is hard to reach.
- ▶ **Replace batteries at least once a year** using a 9 volt battery. A good way to remember to do this is to replace batteries on the same day every year, such as the beginning or end of daylight saving.

Long-life photoelectric smoke alarms will give you 10 years of smoke detection without needing to replace the batteries.
- ▶ **Keep your smoke alarms clean** and free from dust and spider webs to keep them in working order.

Make an escape plan



Safely getting everybody out of a house that is on fire, and is dark and smokey, can be a terrifying experience. That's why you need a plan for escaping your home quickly and calmly in a fire.

Get out and stay out! ”



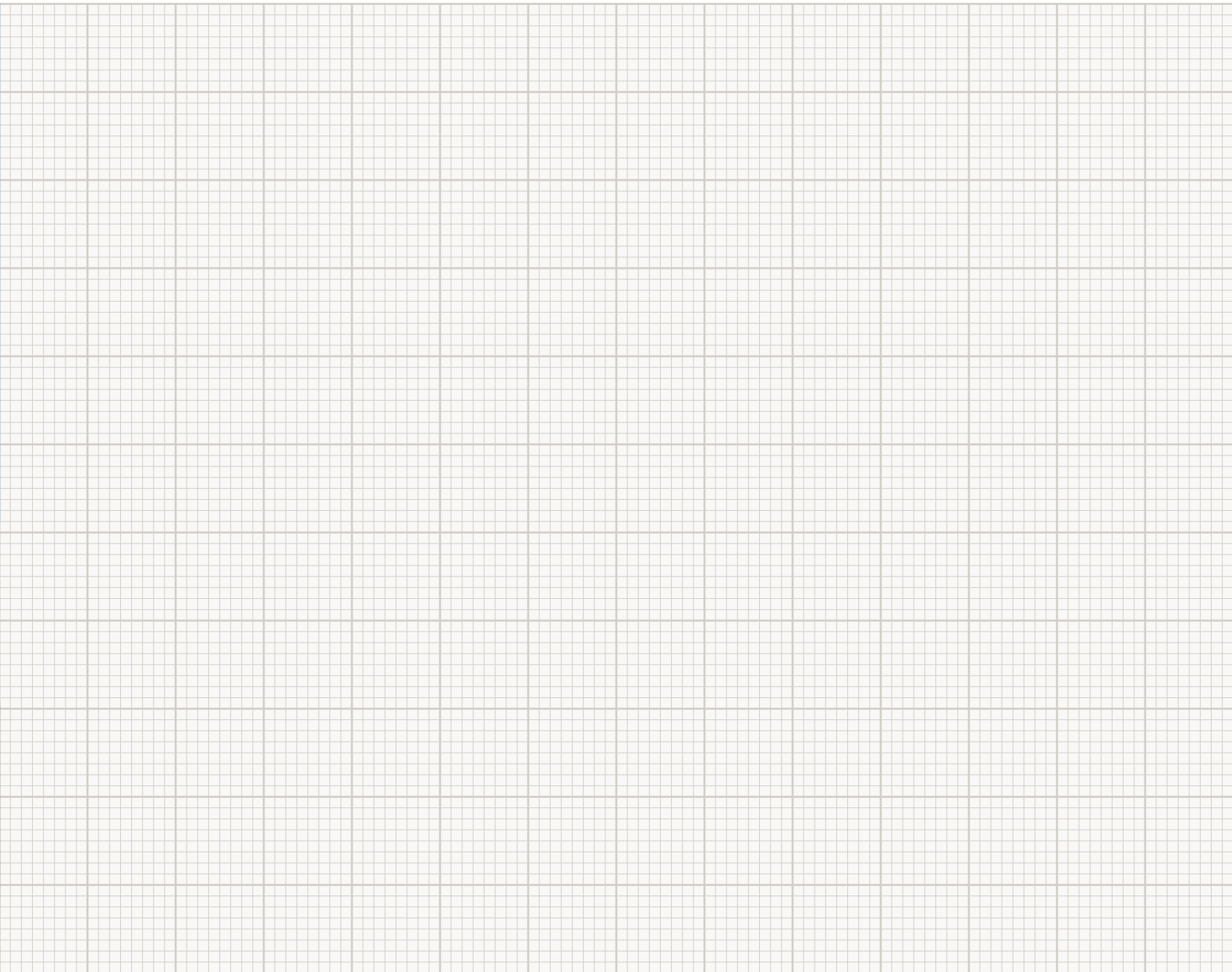
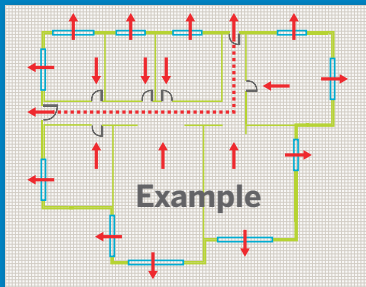
Breathing

smoke from a fire is **fatal** in seconds. That is why you need smoke alarms as an early warning system.

- ▶ **Work out two escape routes for every room**, this may include windows. Make sure all doors and windows that are needed for escape are clear and open easily. If you have a two-storeyed home, think about a safe way to get to the ground level.
- ▶ **Make sure everyone in your household** is familiar with your escape plan. You will all need to know it well so that if you have a fire in your home, rather than panic, you will instinctively know what to do.
- ▶ **ALWAYS keep keys** in deadlocks on doors and windows when you're at home so you can get out quickly in an emergency.
- ▶ **Draw your escape plan on the following page**, or you can plot it on the grid available on our website www.fire.org.nz/fire-safety/escape-plans. Keep it in a visible place in your home.

Escape plan grid

- 1 Start with a floor diagram of your home.
- 2 Always plan two ways out of each room.
- 3 Pick a meeting place outside the home. It could be your letterbox if it is far enough away.



Making your home safe



FACTS:

25% of all house fires start in the kitchen.

Alcohol is involved in a significant percentage of fatal house fires. Don't drink and fry.



It's easy to make your home safe from a fire. ”

Here's a few things you can do.

Cooking

- ▶ **Never leave cooking unattended.** Unattended cooking is the leading cause of house fires and is responsible for 33% of all fire fatalities in New Zealand. If you need to leave the room, even for a minute, turn the stove off.
- ▶ **Never throw water on a frypan that's on fire** or try to carry it outside. If you can, use a pot lid or a large flat object like a chopping board, or wet a tea towel and place it over the pan to starve the fire of oxygen.

- ▶ **If you do have a fire** on your stove, try (if you can), to turn the power or gas off either at the stove or the mains.
- ▶ **Regularly clean your stove** to prevent the build up of spilled fats and burnt foods which can cause fires. If you have a rangehood, clean its filters regularly. Did you know you can put these in the dishwasher to clean them?
- ▶ **If you've been drinking** don't attempt to have a fry-up. Order takeaways or use the microwave instead.
- ▶ **Keep curtains, tea towels, oven mitts** and anything flammable well away from the cooking area. Wear tight fitting sleeves or roll them up when you are cooking.

FACT:

Nearly half of all fire deaths among older people involve heating appliances.



Home heating

- ▶ **Keep everything at least one metre away from a heater or fireplace** as most clothing and textiles will burn and can cause burn injury or death. This includes yourself, furniture, bedding or clothes that you want to dry. Never place or hang clothes on a heater to dry.
- ▶ **Open fires should be screened** with a proper fireguard and never left unattended. Dispose of ashes safely in a metal bucket – ashes can take up to three days to cool. Ensure you have your chimney checked and/or swept each year.

Smoking

- ▶ **If you are tired**, taken medication or have had a lot of alcohol, avoid smoking. If you fall asleep with the cigarette alight it could start a fire.
- ▶ **Ensure that all cigarettes and matches** have been properly extinguished before you leave a room.
- ▶ **Ideally, confine smoking to outdoors.**

Electrical safety

- ▶ **Do not overload** any power sockets (including multi-boxes) with double adapters. One appliance per power socket. Consider only using multi-boxes with circuit breakers.
- ▶ **If you are concerned about** the performance of any appliances like electric blankets, heaters, irons or toasters, have them checked by a qualified electrician. Avoid buying second-hand appliances. If you do, ensure they are certified as safe.
- ▶ **Ensure appliance cords are** in good condition and not frayed.
- ▶ **Extension cords are not designed** as permanent replacements to your home's internal wiring. Never put them under carpets or mats or use them when they are tightly coiled.

Always

keep children, clothes, furniture and bedding at least one metre from the heater.

FACT:

The majority of fire deaths occur in homes while people are sleeping.



- ▶ **Turn off and, where practical, unplug appliances** when not in use. Do not leave TVs on standby mode, switch them off.
- ▶ **Use light bulbs with appropriate wattage** for the size of the light fixture. Using a higher wattage bulb than the fixture was designed for may cause over-heating and fire.
- ▶ **Regularly clean electrical appliances** to prevent the build up of dust.
- ▶ **Do not place fans, heaters, televisions, clothes dryers or electrical equipment** in areas with restricted airflow.

Electric blankets

- ▶ **Worn and old electric blankets** can cause an electric shock, fire and possibly even death.
- ▶ **When putting your electric blanket away** for the summer, don't fold it, roll it.

- ▶ **Make sure the electric blanket is always flat** on the bed and that controls or cords are not twisted or caught between the mattress and the base of the bed. Twisted cords are the biggest cause of electric blanket fires.
- ▶ **If your electric blanket is more than 10 years old**, consider replacing it with a newer model. They are much safer to use and probably more energy efficient.

Drying your clothes

- ▶ **Remove lint** from the clothes dryer filter after each use.
- ▶ **Ensure there is proper ventilation** and airspace around the clothes dryer.

Going to bed

- ▶ **Never smoke in bed.** You may fall asleep while you're smoking and if the cigarette is still alight, it could start a fire.
- ▶ **Do a fire check every night** before you go to bed.
 - Make sure all heaters, appliances and lights are switched off, except for any night lights that you have for your own safety. Switch your TV off at the wall – do not leave in 'standby' mode.
 - If you have an open fire, make sure the fire is out and that you have a proper fire guard in place.
 - Check keys are in deadlocks.
 - Close any doors to the kitchen and living rooms. In the event of a fire, this will stop it spreading to bedrooms.
- ▶ **It's a good idea** to keep a torch and phone next to your bed.
- ▶ **Never sleep with an electric blanket on**, even on a low temperature. Always switch it off before you hop into bed.

If the worst should happen



FACT:

A house, when fully ablaze, can reach temperatures of 1,100°C. The body starts to shut down at 70°C.



You are more at risk of a fire in your home than you are from an intruder.”

At the first sign of fire:

- ▶ **If there are others in the house** shout 'FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!' Tell them to get out.
- ▶ **If the fire is well underway and there is a lot of smoke**, get down on your hands and knees and crawl out of the house. Heat and smoke rise, so breathing and visibility will be better at ground level. Breathing in smoke is a major cause of fire deaths.
- ▶ **If you can, close the doors behind you** as you exit – this helps prevent the fire and smoke from spreading.

- ▶ **Always keep your keys in the door deadlocks** when you are at home. People have died in fires because their doors have been deadlocked with keys kept somewhere else – they haven't been able to get out.
- ▶ **Call 111 immediately** – either from a neighbour's house or on a mobile phone.
- ▶ **Keep well away from the house** and NEVER re-enter it.
- ▶ **If you are unable to get out** of the house, close the door of the room you are in and put a towel under it to stop seeping smoke coming in. Go to the window and yell 'FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!' Wait to be rescued.

We can even come to you

If you, or someone you know, is elderly, disabled or has a Community Services Card, you may qualify for a free home fire safety check.

Just call 0800 NZ FIRE (0800 693 473) to see if you're eligible for firefighters' to visit and do a FREE fire safety inspection of your home. You may qualify to have a FREE long-life, photoelectric alarm installed.



Need more info?

- ▶ If you're unsure about anything related to fire safety and want more information, you can either call your local fire station (under Fire Service in the phone book), or visit www.fire.org.nz
- ▶ If you live in an area that is served by a volunteer fire brigade, there may be no-one at the station to take your call. Just leave a message with your name and phone number, and you'll be called back.

www.fire.org.nz

Working with communities to protect what they value | Te mahi tahi ki ngā hapori, ki te tiaki i a rātou taonga