

# Good advice on preventing fires in the home



Three out of four fires take place in the home and are usually a result of negligence or technical faults. Remember that it's easier to prevent a fire than to extinguish one.

## Electrical faults

There are all different kinds of electrical appliances in our homes and these can cause fires if they overheat or are incorrectly used. If you notice any suspicious smells or hear noises in the electrical system then contact an electrician. It is always best for a professional to repair cables and electrical appliances. Electrical fires can also be prevented by following quite routine measures. Always turn the TV off at the switch, don't leave tumble-driers, washing machines and dishwashers on when you go out or go to bed. Never dry clothes on radiators or sauna heaters. Get into the habit of unplugging toasters and irons. Install a residual current circuit breaker.

## Candles and open fires

Forgetting to blow out candles is the cause of many fires in our homes. Don't place candles close to curtains or the television. Use candlesticks that are made out of incombustible material such as ceramic, glass or tin. Don't use

wooden candlesticks. Get into the habit of never leaving a room without blowing out the candles.

Children have always been interested in fire so it's important that they learn how to handle it. Never scare a child about fire – it just increases their curiosity. Never leave a child alone with a burning candle or open fire.

## Smoking

Smoking is one of the most common causes of fire with fatal outcome. It's not just smoking in bed that makes smoking dangerous; it is just as dangerous to fall asleep whilst smoking in an armchair or sofa. Wet the contents of the ashtray before emptying it.

## The kitchen can be a fire risk

Many fires start on the cooker. Dry cooking is a common cause of fire. Fat and oil burn when the temperature gets high, and so does stearin. Never leave anything boiling on the cooker unattended. Automatic cooker supervision is a good method of avoiding fires that start

on the cooker – you can read more about it on [www.brandsakerthem.se](http://www.brandsakerthem.se).

Keeping your kitchen extractor fan as clean as possible can help reduce the risk of fire in the kitchen since fat and soot burn extremely easily.

## Combustibles

Petrol, methylated spirits, paraffin and fire-lighting fluid are all extremely combustible. Keep these fluids in suitable containers and out of the reach of children.

Light barbecues using fire-lighting fluid. Never use petrol or methylated spirits.

Never throw aerosol sprays on open fires as this would cause a huge explosion.

Bottled gas is highly combustible so it's important that it's handled correctly. Turn off the valve when you have finished using bottled gas. If you used bottled gas in a boat or caravan then it's essential that you regularly check connections, valves and pipes to ensure that they are not damaged. Read more in the

Swedish Fire Protection Association's good advice leaflet on the use of bottled gas in caravans.

## Arson

Residential districts are often the target of arson attacks. The best way of preventing these is by not storing inflammable material in stairwells or other easily-accessible places. It is also important to keep attics, basements and garages locked and to ensure that the lights work. These measures make things more difficult for arsonists.

## For your help

### *Smoke alarms*

In a fire it's the smoke which is the most dangerous and which causes death. A smoke alarm reacts to the dangerous smoke and wakes you up. Check your smoke alarms regularly. Read more in the Swedish Fire Protection Association's good advice leaflet Smoke alarms in the home.

### *Hand-held extinguisher*

A hand-held extinguisher is an excellent tool for starting to extinguish a fire. Everyone in the family should know

how the extinguisher works and where it is placed. You can read more in the Swedish Fire Protection Association's good advice leaflet Choosing the right extinguisher.

### *Evacuation plan*

Make an evacuation plan together with your children. If possible ensure that you have at least two different emergency exits for everyone in the family. Make sure that you can get out if a fire starts in your apartment. Don't lock the door from the inside using the mortise lock. Put up the evacuation plan where everyone can see it and decide upon a meeting place outside the building. Make it easier to evacuate your house by installing an evacuation ladder for example.

### *Is your home safe?*

- Remove all inflammable materials close to the cooker.
- Unplug the coffee machine and toaster when they're not being used. Install a timer.
- Ensure that lightbulbs are of the correct wattage and that extension cords aren't being squashed.

- Replace faulty power points/plugs and tighten any loose ones.
- Don't try towels or other objects made of inflammable material on the radiators.
- Blow out candles when you leave a room.
- If fuses often blow then ask an electrician to trace the fault
- Unplug electric and aerial cables in a thunderstorm.
- Ensure that there is plenty of air around your TV.
- Remove cloths, candles and anything else on your TV that can cause a fire.
- Make sure that the kitchen extractor fan is clean.
- Do you have smoke alarms and where are they?
- Do you have a hand-held extinguisher at home?
- Vacuum behind the fridge and/or freezer.
- Ensure that candlesticks are not placed close to curtains or the like and that they have incombustible decorations.
- Install a residual current circuit breaker.

## ALWAYS CALL 112 IN THE EVENT OF FIRE

The Swedish Fire Protection Association is a member organization which works towards making Sweden a safer place. Through information and training we help people, companies and organizations to take responsibility for fire prevention. 08-588 474 00. [www.brandskyddsforeningen.se](http://www.brandskyddsforeningen.se)