

Fire safety

in your home

**a guide
for public
housing
tenants**



Contents

Fire...it is an ever-present danger.

Every day the Fire Brigade is called out to many fires in people's homes.

These fires result in a huge damage bill, but the biggest cost is in serious injury and the loss of life.

The fact is most fires are caused by accidents which could have been avoided.

When it comes to fire, don't think 'It won't happen to me.' Fires do happen.

This brochure explains how to keep your home and family safe from fire.

More Information

Need more details on how you can protect your family and home from fire?

For more information, visit the Emergency Services Authority website: www.esa.act.gov.au

This booklet provides tenants with broad advice on fire safety in their home and is intended as a guide only. *Fire Safety in Your Home: a guide for public housing tenants* was developed by the Victorian Office of Housing in conjunction with the Victorian Metropolitan Fire Brigade. Permission to reproduce this material was granted to ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services for distribution to tenants of Housing ACT.

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Cooking 3

Electricity 5

- Heating
- Electric blankets
- Laundry

Naked flames 7

- Matches and cigarette lighters
- Smoking
- Candles and oil burners
- Heating

Smoke alarms 9

Plan your home escape 10

Emergency information 11

Cooking

One third of all fires in the home occur in the kitchen, so it is important that you take extra care when cooking.



- Never leave cooking unattended. If you must leave the kitchen turn off the stove or appliance.



- Wear clothes with tight fitting sleeves when cooking to prevent loose sleeves catching fire.
- Cook with the pot handles turned away from the edge of the stove so they won't be knocked over.



- Be careful when cooking with oil. Heat oil slowly.
- Do not throw water onto a fat or oil fire because it will cause an explosion.



Cooking



- Do not cook in any rooms of your home other than the kitchen.
- Cooking in bedrooms is especially dangerous because you are surrounded by bed linen and clothing which will catch fire easily. A simple accident could turn your home into an inferno, leading to serious injury or loss of life.



- Do not use portable cooking facilities inside the home. This includes portable gas rings, camp stoves or barbecue heat beads.
- Do not store gas cylinders in your home as they can easily leak and one small spark can ignite a fire.



- Always use the cooking facilities provided in your kitchen.

There are other methods of cooking which you can use safely:

- The oven in your home will cook food safely. Think about using electric woks for special foods which require lots of heat.

Electricity

Often fires in the home are caused by faulty electrical appliances. A few simple precautions will make your home safer.



- Do not use double-adaptors to piggy-back a number of electrical items from the one power point. This could cause a short circuit and a fire.

- Frayed cords are dangerous and could cause a fire. Do not use appliances with frayed cords.

- If you need to use several electrical appliances in one area, use an approved powerboard (AS3105). A powerboard with more than two outlets should have a reset button.

- When you have finished using your toaster, kettle or iron turn them off at the power point and unplug them.

- Make sure there's plenty of space to allow air to flow around televisions, portable heaters, stereos and computers. If your electrical equipment gets hot it may cause a fire.

- You should contact Housing ACT immediately if you have any problems with wiring or power points in your home.

- Never place electrical cords or wires under carpets or rugs, as they can overheat and cause a fire.



Electricity

Heating: You should take care when using electric radiators or electric portable heaters.



- Do not allow electric cords to cross the front of the heater and make sure that there is space between portable heaters and the wall.
- You should not use portable kerosene heaters, oil burners or heaters of a similar kind.

Electric blankets: Electric blankets can also be dangerous if they are not cared for properly. The ACT Fire Brigade recommends that you turn on your electric blanket 30 minutes before you go to bed, and always turn off your electric blanket before getting into bed.



- Check your electric blanket regularly for:
 - faulty wiring—check that wires are not sticking out of the blanket or obviously broken
 - frayed connections
 - broken controls.
- Never leave your electric blanket control under the mattress.
- Never fold your electric blanket when storing it, as this can break wires in the electric blanket.

Laundry: It is important that you clean the lint filter in the clothes dryer after every use.

A build-up of lint may cause a fire.



- Make sure the dryer goes through a complete cycle so that it can cool down.

Naked flames

Matches and cigarette lighters



- Children are attracted to matches and cigarette lighters. Keep them out of reach of young children.
- Teach older children that matches and cigarette lighters are only used in the presence of adults.
- The ACT Fire Brigade has a fire education program aimed at teaching children about fire.

Contact the ACT Fire Brigade for more information.

Smoking: Smoking in bed is another cause of fire in the home.



- Tiny embers can smoulder in your bed clothes before bursting into flames.
- This may cause serious injury or loss of life.



- Make sure you put out all cigarettes before you put them in the rubbish bin. This can be done by putting a small amount of water into the ashtray.



Naked flames

Candles and oil burners: It is important to take precautions when using candles or oil burners.



- Do not leave candles or oil burners near open windows. The flame could come in contact with the curtains and set them alight.

- Do not use flammable liquids such as spirits or petroleum to provide heat for oil burners.

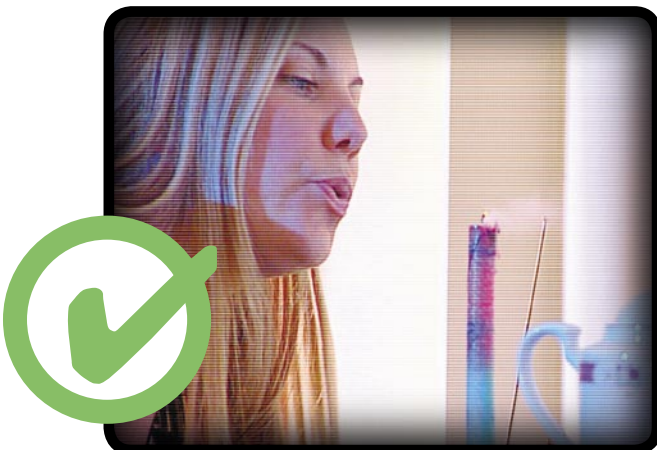
- You should never leave your home while a candle or oil burner is alight.



- Keep candles and oil burners away from small children—candles and oil burners should only be used in the presence of adults.

- Make sure that candles are set up on non-combustible surfaces such as metal or china so that hot wax won't drip and start a fire.

Heating: Do not use portable kerosene heaters, oil burning heaters of a similar kind.



It is your responsibility, to make sure that care is taken to avoid damage to your home.

Smoke alarms



- The ACT Fire Brigade recommend that you test your smoke alarm every week by gently pushing the test button in the middle of your smoke alarm with the end of a broom handle.
- Notify Housing ACT immediately if you find any fault with your smoke alarm.
- Make sure your smoke alarm is kept clean through regular dusting or vacuuming.



- A smoke alarm will not prevent a fire but it will give you a vital early warning, especially when you are asleep.
- Unless you have a smoke alarm in your bedroom, you and your children should sleep with the bedroom doors open.



Plan your home escape

If fire strikes your home, you need to know how to get out quickly. Planning and practising a home fire escape plan will help you to do this.

1 Hold a household meeting to make sure that everyone knows what to do if there is a fire and that children know to tell you immediately if there is a fire.

2 Make sure you know all possible ways out of every room in your house.

- Can each escape route really be used in an emergency?
- Are passageways inside and outside the home clear?
- Can everyone reach and operate the latches, bolts, locks and chains on doors?
- Arrange a meeting spot outside your home for all household members. This could be the carpark, a playground, or another building.
- Practise your fire escape plan regularly with all members of the household.
- The meeting point shouldn't interfere with Emergency Services access.

3 Make sure your household knows the following fire safety steps:

- If in a room with the door shut, feel the door with the back of your hand. If it is hot, do not open it. Keep low and try to signal for help.
- Learn to crawl low in smoke. Smoke rises, so the freshest air to breathe is close to the ground.
- Once out of your home, stay out. Never go back into a burning property.

4 Call the Fire Brigade immediately from a neighbour's home on '000', or from a mobile phone.

Emergency information

If you have a fire in your home, you should always evacuate to a safe meeting point, closing the door to help contain the fire and smoke, and then call the Fire Brigade on '000'.

Provide the operator with the information they ask for, which will include the exact address, nearest cross street, suburb and state, and nature of the fire.

Make sure your household knows the following fire safety steps:

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- Learn to crawl low in smoke. Smoke rises, so the freshest air to breathe is close to the ground.
- Once out of your home, stay out. Never go back into a burning property.

Also contact Housing ACT on 02 6207 1500 to tell them of the fire.

Further information

If you have any questions or would like further information on fire safety in your home, please contact the ACT Fire Brigade's Fire Safety Unit or Housing ACT.



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**In an emergency, telephone
000
for the police, fire brigade or ambulance.**



ACT Government

