Home Fire Safety

Protect what you value!
The Tasmania Fire Service responds to over 400 house fires each year. Tasmania has the highest fire fatality rate per capita in Australia.

The advice in this booklet is designed to keep you and your family safe and protect what you value.

**Don’t become a statistic. Read this booklet! It could save your life!**

**Fires are fast**

What makes a house fire so devastating is the combination of fire, smoke and the production of poisonous gases. These things combined have the power to kill quickly and silently.

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

That’s why it’s essential you have working smoke alarms installed and a regularly practiced escape plan.

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**30 secs**

By now, smoke alarms would have detected the fire and alerted your family.

**60 secs**

With no warning, the fire goes unchecked. It will quickly take hold, giving off poisonous smoke.

**3 mins**

The fire reached in excess of 800 degrees. All of the contents in the room will be on fire and it will have spread to other rooms in the house.
How can you protect yourself and your family?

- Smoke alarms
- Home fire escape plan
- Keeping children safe

Where are the danger hot spots?

- Kitchen
- Bedroom
- Heating
- Laundry
- Electrical
- Candles, oil burners and cigarettes

What to do?

- Emergency calls
- Checklist

Residential fire damage in Tasmania costs millions of dollars every year, the emotional cost is much more.
Only working smoke alarms save lives!

1. You should **install** a photoelectric smoke alarm in each sleeping area, hallway and living area. **Smoke alarms** should be supported by a home fire escape plan.

2. **Test** alarms monthly.

3. **Vacuum** dust from alarms every 6 months.

4. **Replace** batteries once a year. Some alarms have 10 year lithium batteries that do not need replacing every year.

5. **Mains powered smoke alarms** also have back-up batteries - check with the manufacturer if your model has batteries that need to be replaced regularly, or whether it has a re-chargeable battery.

6. Young children are likely to **sleep through** the sound of a smoke alarm, so **you must alert them** to a fire and help them escape to safety.

7. **Installation** of a smoke alarm is quick and easy. Follow the manufacturers instructions. Generally, because smoke rises, mounting in the middle of the ceiling is recommended.

8. **Maximum protection** can be gained from interconnecting smoke alarms: When one smoke alarm operates, all connected alarms will operate.

9. Most alarms have a **life span of 10 years**, after this time, the entire unit should be replaced.
10. **Smoke alarms for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

These alarms have a flashing strobe light and a vibrating pad for placing under the pillow that activate when the smoke alarm sounds.

If you require an alarm for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing contact Tasdeaf TTY: 6231 6501, e-mail reception@tasdeaf.org.au or visit www.tasdeaf.org.au Ph. 03 6231 6501.
Home fire escape plan

Possibly the most important plan you’ll ever make.

Design a home fire escape plan to suit your home and talk about it with everybody in the house. If a child has been involved in planning and practising an escape plan they are more likely to get out alive in a house fire.

The sample opposite illustrates a possible plan. There is a tear-out gridded sheet provided in the back of this booklet for you to design your own escape plan.

1. Make a **home fire escape plan** and **practise** at least twice a year.
2. **Crawl low** if caught in smoke.
3. **Use windows** as an alternative means of escape if safe to do so.
4. **Cover** broken glass with a blanket or doona.
5. **Once out, stay out** at a safe meeting place outside your home (e.g. next to your letterbox).
6. **If clothes catch fire** stop, put your hands over your face, gently drop to the ground and rock and roll on the ground until your clothes stop burning.

Remember it is important to involve everyone in your household in discussing fire safety, what to do and where to go in an emergency.
Make sure you can get out of your home quickly if there is a fire.

The best fire escape plan is worthless if your escape route is blocked. While deadlocks and security grilles may deter thieves, they can be deadly in a fire. When you are in the house:

1. **Leave keys** in any deadlock, or on a hook close to the door or window, and out of reach of intruders.

2. **Make sure** that window security grilles and screens open **readily** from the inside.

3. **Make sure** that all windows and doors **open easily** for all members of your family.
Do these things to safely escape a fire

Get down, get low, get out – smoke is poisonous, get underneath it on your hands and knees, and crawl to the nearest safe exit. 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 safe meeting place – such as your letterbox.

- **Call triple zero ‘000’**
- Ask for Fire, Police or Ambulance.
- Stay calm, don’t shout, speak slowly and clearly.
- When asked give the:
  - **State you live in**
  - **Street number**
  - **Street name**
  - **Suburb**
  - **Nearest cross street**.
- In a fire, **get out, stay out** and call triple zero ‘000’ from a mobile or a neighbour’s phone.
- **Wait for the Fire Service to arrive** and tell them where the fire is and if anyone is still inside.

**Fire extinguishers and fire blankets**

REMEMBER – Saving lives through a quick escape is far more important than saving property.

You should be trained in the use of an extinguisher or fire blanket to use them safely and effectively.

**An emergency is not the time to read instructions.**

If you do not know how to use a fire extinguisher or fire blanket:

- **Close the door** to contain the fire.
- Ensure **everyone is out** of the building.
- Call the fire service on **triple zero ’000’**.
- **Never go back** into the building once out.
- Gather at your **planned safe meeting place**.
- **Wait** to meet the fire service.
Keeping children safe

What can you do?

Supervise and educate your children:
- Supervise your children at all times, especially around fire, cooking and heating.
- Teach your children that fire is a tool for adults to use, not a toy.
- Don’t let your children use fire – helping with lighting the fire or burning off makes children think that they can control fire.
- Teach your children facts about fire safety and the consequences of fire.

Remove the temptation:
- Lock away matches and lighters – just like you lock away medicines and other dangerous household substances.
- Teach your children to tell you about any unattended matches or lighters they find and reward them for their honesty.
- If you are a smoker, think about giving up. Smokers are more likely to have children who light fires.

Make your home fire safe:
- Lead by example – reduce the risk of fire by using fire, cooking, heating and electricity safely.
- Have working photoelectric smoke alarms in all bedrooms, hallway and living areas.
- Make sure your children know what an alarm sounds like and what to do if it goes off. Sleeping children are unlikely to wake to an alarm unless it’s in their room and they have been taught what the sound of the alarm means.

Make a plan to get your children out alive:
- Everybody in the house should know what to do if there is a fire – have a family escape plan and practice it.

www.tfseducation.com.au
Teach your children to **Stop, Drop, Rock and Roll** in case their clothes catch fire:

**Stop** – put your hands over your face.

**Drop** – gently drop to the ground.

**Rock and Roll** – rock and roll back and forth on the ground until your clothes stop burning. This will smother the flames while protecting your face, mouth and lungs from the flames.

**Cool a burn:**

- Run cold water over any burns for **at least 20 minutes**.
- Do not use butter, ice or ointments to cool burns, and do not cover burns with cotton wool.
- Do not take off burnt clothes. Burnt clothes should only be removed by medical staff. If the burn is larger than a 20c piece see a doctor.

**Emergency numbers:**

- Place a list of **emergency numbers** near the telephone.
- Go through the numbers with your children as soon as they are old enough to understand.
- Teach your children to dial **triple zero ‘000’** in an emergency.
Many house fires start in the kitchen and the majority of all kitchen fires begin from cooking that is left unattended on the stove.

1. **Never** leave cooking unattended. **Turn it off before you turn away!**

2. **Don’t** let fats and oils build up around the stove, they can catch fire. Heat oil carefully and do not overfill saucepan.

3. **Never** use water, flour or salt to put out an oil or fat fire on the stove.

4. **Use** a lid or fire blanket to smother a fire in a pot or pan.

5. **Never** try to carry a burning pot or pan.

6. **Keep** pot handles turned inwards.

7. **Don’t** hang objects over oven door handles eg. tea towels.

8. **Store** flammable materials away from the stove.

9. **Empty** the crumbs from your toaster regularly, and never position the toaster near curtains or blinds.

10. **Wear** clothing with tight fitting sleeves when cooking.

11. **Leave** immediately if your home catches fire. **Stay out and dial triple zero ‘000’ for help.**

**Turn it off before you turn away.**
Bedroom Fire Safety

Electric Blankets

1. Leave your blanket on the bed, never fold for storage as it may cause damage to the wiring.
2. Make sure your blanket is flat and tied firmly to the bed.
3. Never sleep with your electric blanket turned on.
4. Don’t leave your electric blanket turned on when you are not at home.
5. Run your hands over the blanket regularly and if you find any hot spots turn the blanket off and have it checked.
6. Do not place heavy objects on your electric blanket.

General

1. Don’t smoke in bed.
2. Program triple zero ‘000’ into your phone in the bedroom.
3. Light globes are hot. Fit bedside lamps with a compact fluorescent bulb. Don’t put material over the lamp.

Turn off your electric blanket.
1. Don’t place clothing too close to heaters – it should be at least two metres (six feet) from any source of heat.

2. Never leave clothes near the heater if leaving the house or going to bed.

3. Check clothing regularly if drying near a heater.

4. Use fire screens at all times with open fires.

5. Don’t sit too close to the heaters.

6. Clean and maintain chimneys and heater flues yearly.

7. Maintain heaters according to manufacturers’ instructions.

8. Don’t leave your heater door open or remove screens on open fires.

9. Be careful with the disposal of ashes from the hearth or wood heater. Ashes can take up to five days to cool. Always place ashes in a metal container. Dispose of ashes well clear of your home and pour water over them.

10. Never use an outdoor heater indoors.
Laundry

1. **Clean** dryer lint filters **before** every use.
2. **Ventilate** dryers adequately.
3. **Allow** dryers to complete their cool down cycle.
4. **Label** flammable liquids and poisons clearly and keep in correct containers.
5. **Store** poisons and flammable liquids safely away from children.

Electrical

1. **Don’t overload power points** or power boards.
2. **Replace** damaged plugs and leads.
3. **Use powerboards** with overload protection.
4. **Never** handle electrical equipment with wet hands.
5. **Switch off and unplug** appliances when not in use.
6. **Don’t** use faulty electrical equipment until it has been repaired.
7. **Don’t** place extension leads under carpets or furniture.
8. **Install** an earth leakage circuit breaker.
9. **Check** electrical wiring and switches regularly, **especially** in older homes. This must be done by an authorised tradesperson.

Further Information

For further information on electrical safety contact:

- Office of Electrical Standards & Safety, Ph: **1300 366 322** or visit [www.wst.tas.gov.au](http://www.wst.tas.gov.au)
Candles, Oil Burners and Cigarettes

Candles, oil burners and cigarettes can all be dangerous fire hazards:

- **Do not** smoke in bed.
- **Dampen** cigarette butts before putting them in the rubbish.
- Use a **child resistant** lighter.
- **Butt out** in a deep-sided ashtray or metal container filled with sand.
- **Store matches and lighters** out of children’s sight and out of their reach.
- **Make sure** your candles are on properly designed candle holders.
- **Don’t go to sleep** when a candle or oil burner is alight.
- **Do not** put candles or oil burners near windows; be careful, curtains can catch fire easily.
- **Do not** place lighted candles where they can be knocked over by children, pets or anyone else.
- Keep candles **out of the reach** of children and pets.
Call triple zero ‘000’

- Ask for Fire, Police or Ambulance.
- Stay calm, don’t shout, speak slowly and clearly.
- When asked give the:
  
  **State you live in, Street number, Street name, Suburb, Nearest cross street.**

In a fire, **get out, stay out** and call triple zero ‘000’ from a mobile or a neighbour’s phone.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, you can contact emergency services through the National Relay Service.

**Internet relay users**

If you use internet relay, you can ask for **Triple Zero (000)**. Your call will be given priority over other internet relay calls. You will be asked if you want police, fire or ambulance.

**Speak and Listen users**

(for people with a speech impairment only)

There is a separate emergency call procedure for Speak and Listen callers who use an ordinary phone or mobile, rather than a TTY. Dial **1800 555 727** and then ask for Triple Zero (000). These are toll-free numbers. Calls to this number are given priority over other NRS calls. You will be asked if you want police, fire or ambulance. The relay officer will dial the correct service and stay on the line to help you, if necessary, communicate with the emergency service.

**TTY users**

Dial **106** from your TTY (also known as a teletypewriter or textphone). The 106 emergency relay service provides access to fire, police or ambulance services. The 106 emergency service **cannot** be accessed by an ordinary phone or by text message (SMS) on a mobile phone.

**Calls to 106 and 000 are FREE 24 hours a day, every day**
## How prepared are you for a Home Fire Safety disaster?

### Answer these questions to find out

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<tr>
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<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Do you have <strong>smoke alarms</strong> in each sleeping area, hallway, living area and at the top of stairways?</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Do you <strong>test</strong> your smoke alarms <strong>every month</strong>?</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Do you <strong>dust and vacuum</strong> your smoke alarms every six months?</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Do you <strong>replace the batteries annually</strong> or when the low battery alarm activates? Remember, Change Your Clock, Change Your Smoke Alarm Battery at the end of daylight savings in April.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Is your house number <strong>easy to see</strong> so emergency vehicles can find you?</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Do you have the emergency phone number <strong>triple zero ‘000’</strong> keyed into all your phones?</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Does everyone know how to – ‘<strong>Cover Your Face and Stop, Drop, Rock and Roll</strong>’ if clothes catch fire?</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Has your household <strong>made and practised</strong> a home fire escape plan?</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Have you planned a <strong>safe meeting place</strong> outside?</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Are the <strong>keys kept in or near exits</strong> with deadlocks in case you need to escape?</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Do you always have electrical repairs, alterations or renovations done by a <strong>qualified electrician</strong>?</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Do you avoid <strong>overloading</strong> power points?</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Do you <strong>switch off</strong> appliances when not in use?</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Are <strong>flammable liquids</strong> stored away from heaters, hot water service pilot lights and other naked flames?</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Is your electric blanket <strong>switched off</strong> before you get into bed?</td>
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## House fire?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>16.</strong> Do you always use a <strong>fire screen</strong> with an open fire?</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>17.</strong> Do you keep clothing, furniture and curtains at least <strong>2 metres away from heaters</strong>?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18.</strong> Are <strong>matches and cigarette lighters</strong> locked away from children?</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>19.</strong> Do you <strong>clean the lint filter</strong> of your clothes dryer after each load?</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>20.</strong> Does everyone know the <strong>cold water first aid</strong> treatment for burns?</td>
<td>YES</td>
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**Total number of ‘yes’ answers**

**What did you score? Every ‘Yes’ scores a point.**

**16 to 20: Well done.** You are giving yourself the best chance of protecting your life, your family and your home from a house fire. **Keep it up!**

**10 to 15: Not bad.** But there are still several things you can do to decrease the likelihood of fire.

**Less than 10:** The potential for fire in your household is dangerously high. **You need to be far more fire aware** and act now to better protect your family and your home.
Possibly the most important plan you’ll ever make.

Design your home fire escape plan to suit your home and talk about it with everybody in the house. If a child has been involved in planning and practising an escape plan they are more likely to get out alive in a house fire.

- Make a home fire escape plan and practise at least twice a year.
- Crawl low if caught in smoke.
- Use windows as an alternative means of escape if safe to do so.
- Cover broken glass with a blanket or doona.
- Once out, stay out at a safe meeting place outside your home (e.g. next to your letterbox).

The best fire escape plan is worthless if your escape route is blocked. While deadlocks and security grilles may deter thieves, they can be deadly in a fire. When you are in the house:

- Leave keys in any deadlock, or on a hook (preferably attached to a chain) close to the door or window, and out of reach of intruders.
- Make sure that window security grilles and screens open readily from the inside.
- Make sure that all windows and doors open easily for all members of your family.
- If you have visitors staying over for the first time, show them your escape plan so they know what to do in a fire emergency. Make sure they know where your Safe Meeting Place is located.

Detatch your plan and place on your fridge.

Tasmania Fire Service

www.fire.tas.gov.au
Plan your exit from your home. Draw a plan using the grid below and mark in the exits you could use in a fire emergency. Remember to include **two safe ways** out of any sleeping areas to your **Safe Meeting Place**. See page 7 of this booklet for a sample plan. Some suggestions that may assist are printed overleaf.