



Fire safety and Covid-19

Your Lockdown To-Do List When Working from Home

Public Health advice to stay at home during the Coronavirus pandemic means that most of us will be spending more time at home in the coming months.

If you want to make sure your home is as safe from risks as possible, go through the points below while looking around your home.

1. Smoking and vaping

Are there smokers living in your home? Or if you have essential visitors, such as carers – do they smoke? When people are restricted to their home, they may find themselves smoking more often.

If you need help or advice on quitting, contact the Smoke free National Helpline on 0800 022 4332

Things to check and do:

- Check for near-misses you might not have spotted - scorch or burn marks on floors, clothing or bedding;
- Check that any matches or lighters are kept out of reach of children;
- Check that any e-liquids are out of reach of children and pets;
- Smoke in the garden if you have one;
- Empty all ashtrays carefully and never into a waste bin that could catch fire;
- Place ashtrays in every room you smoke in;
- If you're smoking on your balcony dispose of it safely. Thrown cigarette butts can be blown onto other balconies and start fires;
- Buy deep, heavy ashtrays that are less likely to tip over;
- If you buy any e-cigarette devices buy them from a reputable seller.

2. Cooking

With restaurants and bars closed you may find that you're doing more cooking at home and with children home from school, you might have more distractions to deal with. Head into your kitchen and look around.

- Is there anything that could catch fire near the hobs?

- Check for scorched tea towels or worktops in the kitchen;
- Check your toaster isn't placed under kitchen cabinets or close to anything that can catch fire;
- Check that your oven, hob, cooker hood and grill are clean and in good working order;
- If you have a barbeque, make sure it stays outside, that it's positioned on level ground and kept well away from anything that may catch fire;
- Clear away anything that may fall on the cooker and catch fire;
- If you're called away from cooking, make sure you turn the hobs and grill off first;
- Clean your oven, cooker hood and grill of fat and grease;
- Clear the crumbs from the toaster as these can cause a build-up and catch fire;
- Don't be tempted to use a barbeque on a balcony;
- Buy a heat alarm and test it monthly – you can order these online;
- Buy a CO alarm for your kitchen if you have a gas or solid fuel cooker or boiler in the room;

3. Heating

If you're heating your home for longer than you usually do, you may be worried about your heating bills. If that's the case, you can get advice from GOV.UK. Try not to heat your home in an unsafe way.

- Ensure that candles, incense and oil burners are held firmly in heat resistant holders and placed on a stable surface (ensure that these items are out of reach of children and pets);
- Candles and naked flames - check that candles are a safe distance away from anyone who uses emollient creams, as these are flammable;
- Replace your candles with 'flameless' candles (also known as battery-operated or LED candles);
- Check that any portable heaters are kept clear of furniture and away from bedclothes and curtains;
- Check that portable heaters are kept at least one metre away from any person;
- Remove any clothes drying on portable heaters.

Buy a carbon monoxide alarm for any room that contains a solid fuel, gas or paraffin heater

4. Fireplaces, open fires and log burners

Open fires can provide some much-needed heating to your home but can be a fire risk even when not in use.

- Check for any flammable items near your fireplace or log burner;
- Check that your chimney and flue is clean and well maintained;

- Check that any logs are stored away from solid fuel burners such as the fireplace;
- Don't light a fire in your fireplace if you haven't been able to get your chimney and flue cleaned (once a year, or twice if you're burning logs);
- Remove any clothes drying by your fireplace;
- Buy a fireguard to protect against flying sparks and hot embers;
- Carbon monoxide alarm (for every room containing a gas appliance, fuel burner or paraffin heater);

5. Electrics

With more people working from home, and children at home using tablets and games consoles for longer, you might struggle to find a spare plug socket or a genuine charger to use.

Have a good look around your home at the plug sockets, chargers and any wiring you can see.

Check that none of the electrical sockets in your home are overloaded and if using a fused 'in-line' adaptor (extension lead with sockets in a line, not on a cube) ensure one socket = one plug.

Check that your white goods (such as your dishwasher or tumble dryer) are properly registered and haven't been recalled – <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about-us/our-campaigns/total-recalls-making-whitegoods-safer/>

Empty the fluff from your tumble dryer following the manufacturer's instructions.

Throw out any chargers that either didn't come with the device or that are not genuine replacements.

6. Alarms

It's always better to prevent a fire from happening, but fitting alarms will give an early warning in the event of a fire and allow you vital time to escape.

That's even more important if you are feeling unwell - when you might be less able to react or escape from a fire.

Check you have sufficient smoke alarms in your home (at least one on every floor)

- Check you have a heat alarm in your kitchen – the alarm will sound if an increase in heat is detected;
- Check all your alarms have a 10 year or long-lasting sealed battery;
- Test all your smoke alarms now;
- Put a reminder in your calendar to regularly check your smoke alarms;
- Ask your telecare provider (if you have one) to link your telecare system to your smoke alarms;

7. Escape Routes

Think about how you would leave your home if there was a fire. Consider your route in the middle of the night, and how it might be different during the day if you're all in different parts of your home.

You might have more than your typical amount of groceries, toilet paper, nappies etc in your home, which could be blocking your escape.

8. Bedtime check

If someone in your household is self-isolating and is now sleeping in a different room, make sure you've adapted your bedtime routine accordingly.

Many fires happen at night, when most people are sleeping. You can further reduce the risk in your house by carrying out some simple checks before you go to bed:

- Check everyone in the home knows what to do in an emergency;
- Check everyone knows where the door keys are kept overnight;
- Check that all ground and first floor windows can be opened;
- Check that all the ways in and out of your home are kept clear of anything that may slow down or block your escape;
- Clear your escape routes of any obstacles;
- Make an escape plan and practise it with your household;
- Check all electrical items are turned off before you go to bed, unless they're designed to be left on;
- Close all the doors in your home before you go to bed