

Home Fire Safety



Tasmania Fire Service

2024 Edition



Protect what you value



Smoke Alarms

NEW



Battery Safety



Escape Plans

+ more



Fire safety begins at home.

The advice in this booklet will help you learn how you can prevent house fires and keep you and your loved ones safe.

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

A fire in your home can be devastating, even fatal. Once a fire starts it can spread rapidly, putting you and your loved ones at risk. While the dangers of fire are very real, there is a lot you can do to protect yourself, your family and your home.

The Tasmania Fire Service responds to more than 350 house fires each year. Tasmania has one of the highest fire fatality rates in Australia.

The Tasmania Fire Service is committed to keeping communities safe by sharing home fire safety strategies and information with Tasmanians.

The advice in this booklet will help you learn how you can prevent house fires and keep you and your loved ones safe. Making your home safe from fires and knowing what to do in the event of a fire can be the difference between life and death.



To find out more, go to fire.tas.gov.au

Fires are fast!



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



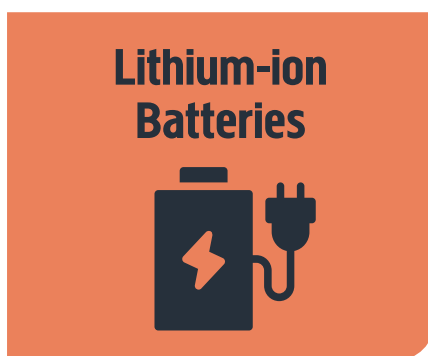
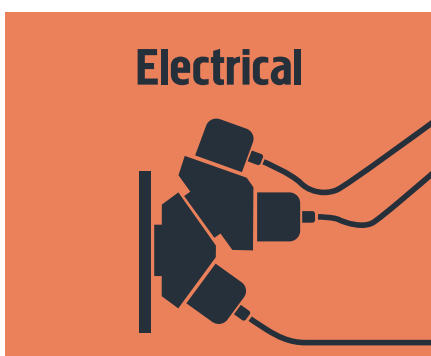
The fire will take hold and grow quickly. Poisonous smoke will start to develop, which is often the deadliest part of a fire.



The fire has reached in excess of 800 degrees Celsius. All of the contents in the room will be on fire and it will have spread to other rooms in the house.

Where do home fires start?

Here are the top 4 most common causes of home fires:



Contents

Smoke alarms	4
Kitchens and cooking	8
Heating	10
Electrical	12
Lithium-ion batteries	14
Cigarettes, open flames and heat packs	16
Bedrooms	18
Outside the home	20
What to do in a fire	22
Home fire escape plan	24
Other resources	27
Fire safety checklist	28



Smoke alarms



! Remember: only working smoke alarms save lives!

You are more likely to die in a house fire without a working smoke alarm, especially when sleeping. When you're asleep, you lose your sense of smell.

A working smoke alarm provides you with early warning of a fire and gives you time to escape safely.

The Tasmania Fire Service recommends:

-  **Install smoke alarms in every room where someone sleeps.** Also install them in hallways, living areas, the garage, and at the top of stairs.
-  **Install photoelectric smoke alarms with a 10-year long-life lithium battery.**
-  **Have interconnected smoke alarms so that if any alarm activates, all smoke alarms will sound.**
-  **Check smoke alarms and replace batteries when daylight savings ends (in autumn).**
-  **Consider carbon monoxide alarms for rooms that have gas appliances or wood heaters.**
-  **Install smoke alarms in all caravans, boats and other mobile property where people might sleep.**
-  **Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.** Purchase an alarm that meets Australian Standards.

To test, press the test button on the smoke alarm every month, and wait for the 'beep, beep, beep'. If it does beep, this means your smoke alarm is still working.






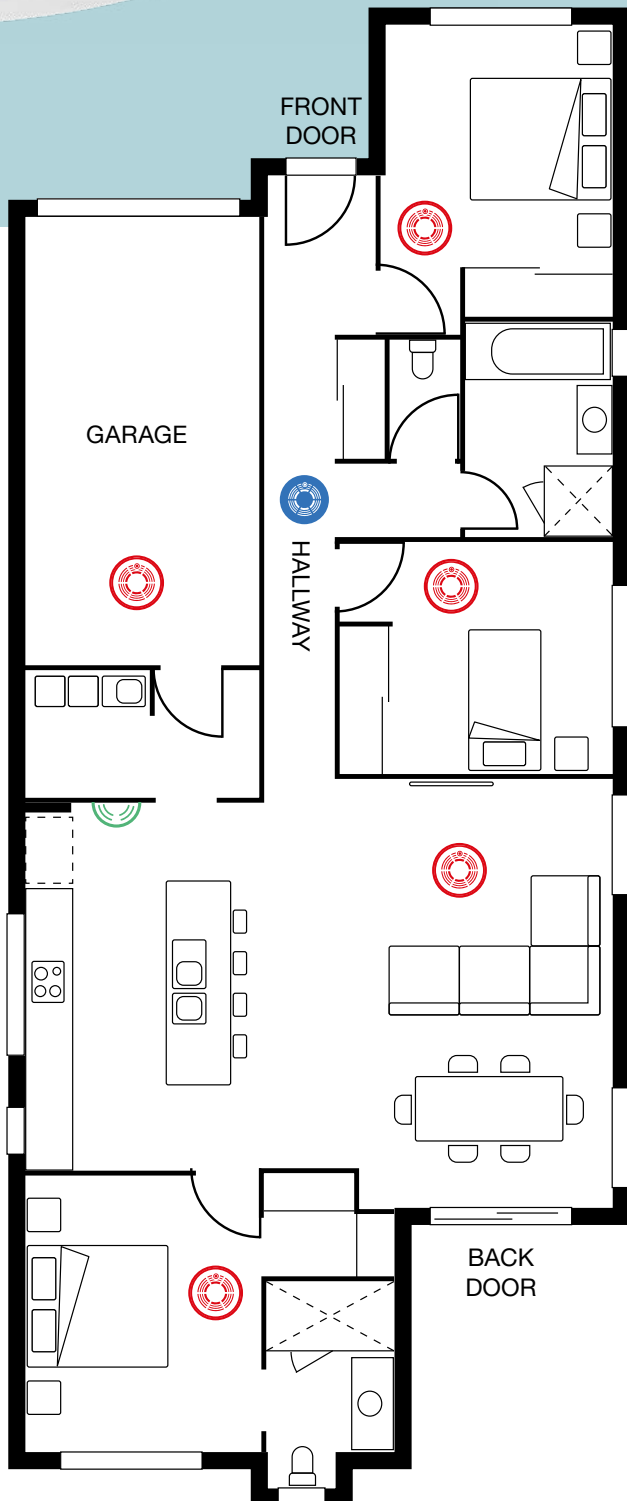
To find out more, and download the Smoke Alarms fact sheets, go to **Home Fire Safety** at fire.tas.gov.au








Hot tips

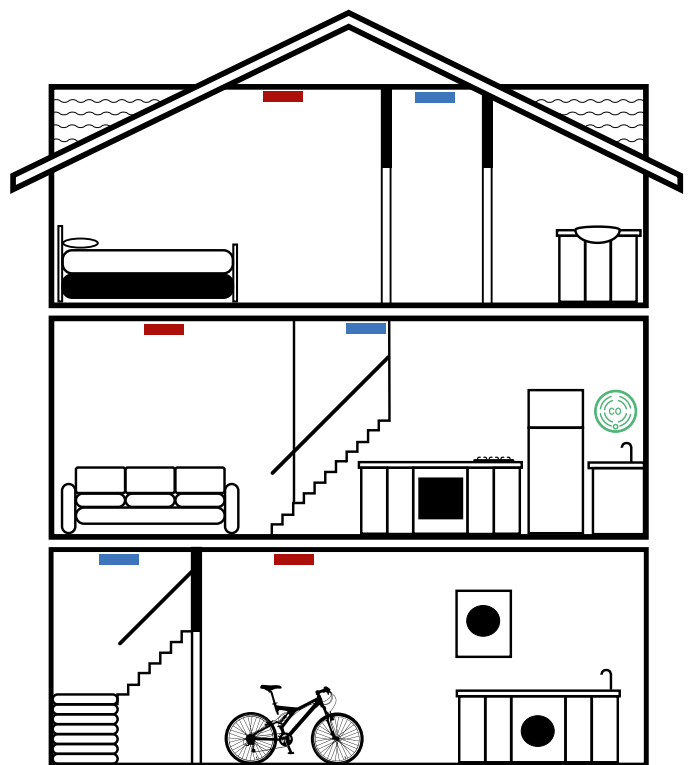
-  If you can't reach your smoke alarm to test it, you can use an item like a broom handle to push the button.
-  **Smoke alarms can collect dust!** Make sure you vacuum smoke alarms using a soft brush.
-  If your smoke alarm makes a single, occasional beep, it may require cleaning, the battery may need changing, or the smoke alarm may be faulty and must be replaced.



Single storey home

Placing smoke alarms:

-  **Required by law:** A smoke alarm in all hallways. A smoke alarm at the top of all stairways in multi-storey homes.
-  **Tasmania Fire Service recommends:** Smoke alarms in these extra locations.
-  **Tasmania Fire Service recommends:** Carbon monoxide alarms for gas appliances and wood heaters.



Multi-storey home



Smoke alarms

Installation is quick and easy.



Install on a ceiling on each level of the house at least 30cm away from the wall or any other objects.



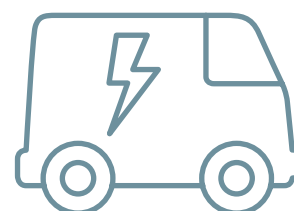
If you install an alarm with a replaceable battery, remember to change the battery every year. Replace all smoke alarms every 10 years.

Carbon monoxide alarms

Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms on the walls of rooms that have gas appliances or wood heaters. Install according to the manufacturer's instructions. **DO NOT** place directly beside or above a fireplace or flame-producing appliance.

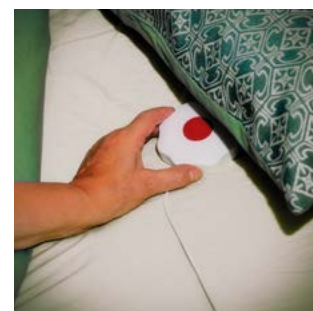


Some smoke alarms may need to be installed by a qualified electrician. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations.



Smoke alarms

for the deaf and hard of hearing.



Specialised smoke alarms are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and can also be linked to personal alarms used by older people or those with disabilities. These alarms include features such as flashing strobe lights and vibration pads for under pillows.



Access to specialised smoke alarms may be made through Expression Australia. Read our fact sheet for more information or visit expression.com.au/services/smoke-alarm-subsidy

Smoke alarms in rental properties

Tenants and property owners **share responsibility under Tasmanian law** to ensure smoke alarms work.

Property owner responsibilities:

- **Install** either mains-powered or 10-year non-removable lithium battery photoelectric smoke alarms.
- Clean, test and ensure all alarms are operating **prior to new occupancy**.
- Replace back-up batteries in mains-powered smoke alarms.
- Replace alarms every 10 years.
- Smoke alarms are required to be installed in all hallways and at the top of all stairways.

Tenant responsibilities:

- **Test and clean** alarms during occupancy.
- **Report faults** to owner/manager.
- **Notify** owner/manager of any fire safety concerns.



To find out more, go to cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/housing/renting/beginning-tenancy/smoke-alarms



Kitchens

Keep looking when cooking.

Home fires often start in the kitchen.

Cooking left unattended is a common cause of fires in the kitchen, so be sure to look when you cook.

- Heat oil carefully and **DO NOT** overfill a pot or pan.
- **NEVER** try to carry a pot or pan that's on fire.
- Keep pot and pan handles turned inwards, away from other heat sources and out of reach of children.
- **DO NOT** hang objects over oven door handles, such as tea towels.
- Store flammable materials away from the stove.
- Empty the crumbs from your toaster regularly, and **NEVER** position the toaster near curtains or blinds.
- Wear clothing with tight-fitting sleeves when cooking.
- Use a lid or fire blanket to smother a fire in a pot or pan if it's safe to do so.



To find out more, and download the Kitchen Fire Safety Fact Sheet, go to Home Fire Safety at fire.tas.gov.au



A fire blanket should be in every kitchen.
Only use if you think it is safe to do so.

Hot tips



Check that the stove, cooktop, oven and other heat sources are turned off before leaving home or going to sleep.



NEVER use water to extinguish an oil or grease fire.



Always **supervise children** in the kitchen.



Don't let fats and oils build up around the stove, as they can catch fire.

DO NOT use a gas or coal barbecue inside the home.

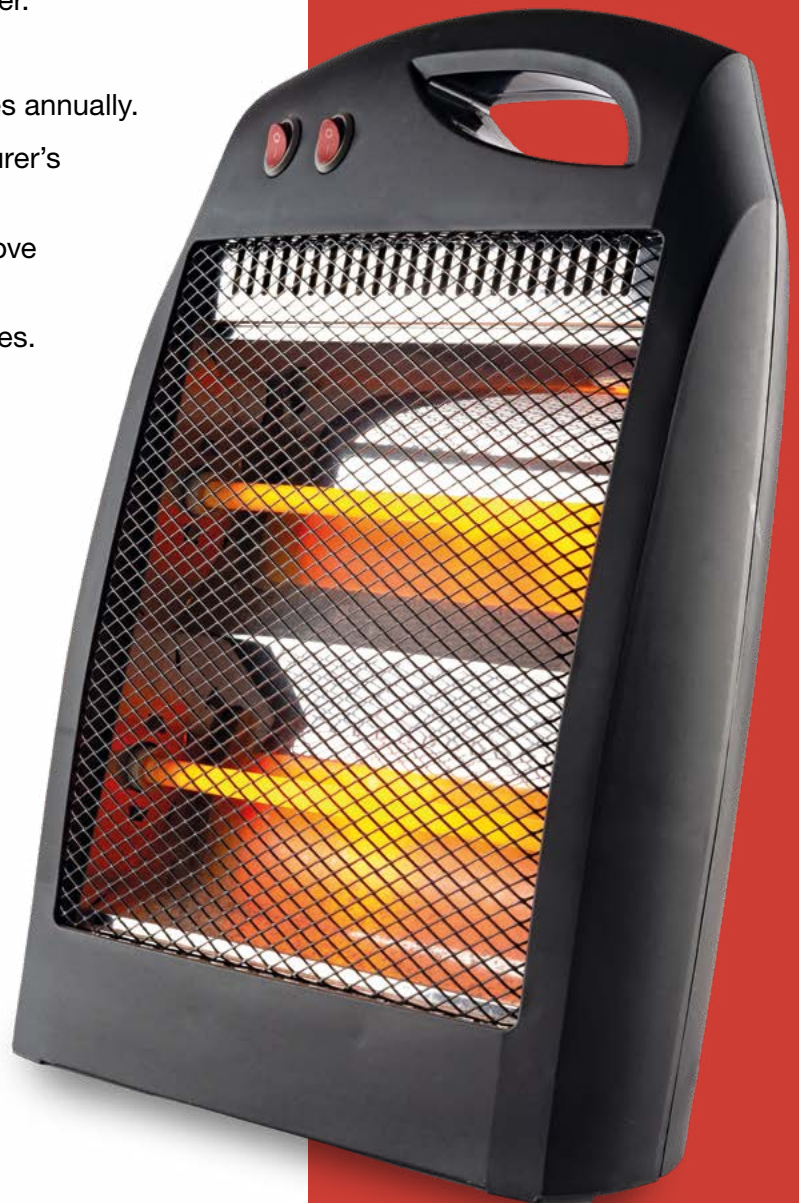






Heating

Heaters are a major cause of fires, especially during winter.

- **NEVER** leave clothes near the heater if leaving the house or going to bed.
- **Check** clothing regularly if drying near a heater.
- **DO NOT** sit too close to the heater.
- **Clean** and maintain chimneys and heater flues annually.
- **Maintain** heaters according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- **DO NOT** leave your heater door open or remove screens on open fires.
- **Supervise** children near heaters and open fires.



Hot tips

-  Make sure home heating, including flues and chimneys, are regularly cleaned and serviced.
-  Extinguish open fires before leaving home or going to sleep.



To find out more, and download the Heating Fire Safety Fact Sheet, go to Home Fire Safety at fire.tas.gov.au

Remember: 2 metres from the heater!



2 metres minimum

DO NOT place clothing or any flammable material too close to heaters – it should be at least **two metres** from any source of heat. Use fire screens at all times with open fires.



Be careful with the disposal of ashes from the hearth or wood heater. Ashes can take up to 5 days to cool. Always place ashes in a metal container. Dispose of ashes well clear of your home and pour water over them.



NEVER use an outdoor heater indoors.







Electrical

If it's electric, be safe and check it.

Electrical items in the home can include the power supply, fixed appliances, portable appliances, power boards and extension leads.



Hot tips

-  All electrical equipment should have an Australian Standard or a Regulatory Compliance Mark (RCM).
-  Make sure power boards have overload protection and are not covered by rugs, clothing, pillows or doonas.
-  It is important to maintain good airflow around electrical items and appliances and remove anything from around or on top of them.
-  **DO NOT** charge electrical devices on beds or flammable surfaces.



Always let the clothes dryer complete its full cycle including the cool cycle. Clean the lint filter before each use.

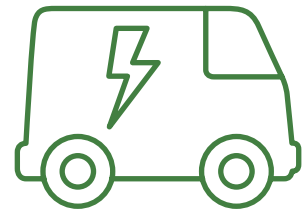


To find out more, and download the **Electrical Safety Fact Sheet**, go to **Home Fire Safety** at fire.tas.gov.au



Only plug in one electrical device per socket. **DO NOT** overload power boards or 'piggyback' plugs into one socket or use double adaptors.

Only use certified electrical tradespeople to repair damaged or faulty electrical appliances, wiring or equipment.



Ensure electrical appliances such as hair dryers and hair straighteners are not left on surfaces that can burn.



If an electrical cord is damaged or wires are exposed, **DO NOT** use the appliance. Replace it or have it repaired.



Lithium-ion batteries

Charge it, monitor it, unplug it.

What is a lithium-ion battery?

Lithium-ion batteries are a type of rechargeable battery that can store a large amount of energy in a smaller space than traditional batteries.

Lithium-ion batteries come in a variety of shapes and sizes for use in many portable devices, including:

- E-bikes, e-scooters and mobility devices
- Toys, drones and cameras
- Power tools
- Laptops, mobile phones, tablets and smart watches
- Vapes and e-cigarettes
- Electric and hybrid vehicles
- Home energy storage systems (home solar batteries).

When lithium-ion batteries fail, they can get very hot very fast. This can cause them to explode and start a fire.



Only use supplied batteries and chargers, or alternatives recommended by the manufacturer that meet Australian Standards.



Unplug devices once fully charged. DO NOT leave batteries to charge unattended, or when you are sleeping.



To find out more, and download the Lithium-ion batteries fact sheet, go to Home Fire Safety at fire.tas.gov.au







If a battery is smoking or flaming, get out and call 000 immediately!



NEVER charge devices on soft furniture or under pillows. Charge devices on flat surfaces, away from flammable items.

Hot tips

-  Ensure working smoke alarms are installed in areas where batteries are charged and stored.
-  Be wary of cheap imitations. Only buy lithium-ion batteries and chargers that meet Australian Standards from reputable suppliers.
-  Allow time for large batteries to cool down after use and before recharging.
-  **DO NOT** use batteries that show signs of swelling, bulging, leaking, overheating, or damage (e.g. cracked, dented, punctured, or crushed). Treat them with caution when handled or moved.



Electric cars, e-bikes, e-scooters or mobility devices should be charged in a garage, shed or carport away from living spaces and flammable materials. **DO NOT** charge or store batteries in exit paths.



DO NOT dispose of batteries or devices in waste or recycling bins. Contact your local council for instructions for where and how to dispose of or recycle batteries.






Cigarettes, open flames and heat packs

Cigarettes, candles, incense and oil burners can cause fires. Always extinguish any open flame or cigarette before leaving home or going to sleep.

- **Dampen** cigarette butts before putting them in the rubbish.
- **Educate** children that lighters and matches are tools not toys.
- **Store matches and lighters** out of children's sight and out of their reach.
- **Make sure** your candles are sitting on candle holders and on a non-flammable surface.
- Keep curtains and other items **clear of open flames**.

Hot tips

-  **DO NOT** smoke in bed. Smoking in bed is one of the leading causes of fire-related deaths.
-  **Always supervise** open flames.
-  Encourage your children to tell you about any matches or lighters they find, and reward them for honesty.



To find out more, and download the Cigarettes, Open Flames and Heat Packs Fact Sheets, go to **Home Fire Safety** at fire.tas.gov.au



Place incense, oil burners and candles on non-flammable surfaces. Keep them out of the reach of children and pets. **DO NOT** place them near curtains or other flammable materials.



Wheat filled heat packs (wheat bags or wheat packs) can help pain, but they also have the potential to cause burns and fire if improperly used. **DO NOT** apply directly to the skin – use a cover or a towel.



Extinguish cigarettes in heavy, deep-sided ashtray or metal container filled with sand.



Make sure your heat pack is in good condition and follow the manufacturer's instructions.



Heat packs can catch on fire in microwaves when overheated or damaged. **DO NOT** leave them unattended when heating.



Bedrooms

Faulty appliances are a major cause of fires in the bedroom. Electric blankets, heaters, air conditioners and fans should be checked regularly.






Electric blankets

All electric blankets sold in Australia must comply with Australian safety standards. However, careless use can cause electric shock, fire and possibly even death.



- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Throw out electric blankets that are worn, old, discoloured or damaged.
- **NEVER** use an electric blanket with a waterbed.
- **Electric blankets are not safe for babies** – they can dehydrate and get burns.

Hot tips

-  Leave your electric blanket on your bed. Folding may cause damage to the wiring.
-  Always switch off electric blankets when leaving the house.
-  **DO NOT** charge mobile phones, tablets and other electronic devices in or on bedding.
-  **DO NOT** lie on or press against a hot water bottle.
-  **DO NOT** smoke in bed.



Placing heavy objects on your electric blanket may damage the wiring, cause hot spots and start a fire.



Use an electric blanket to warm your bed, but always turn it off when you get into bed.

Hot water bottles

Hot water bottles are comforting for warmth and they can assist with injury treatment. Incorrect use can result in serious burns.

- **DO NOT** use a hot water bottle in a bed fitted with an electric blanket.
- Replace hot water bottles every 12 months.
- Check hot water bottles for damage before each use.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- **DO NOT** use boiling water to fill a hot water bottle.
- Use a cover or wrap a towel around the hot water bottle.
- Remove the hot water bottle before you get into bed.



Some light globes can get hot. Fit bedside lamps with cooler compact fluorescent or LED globes. DO NOT place material over lamps.





Outside the home

Fire pits, barbecues, outdoor ovens and outdoor fires can be dangerous if not used correctly.

There are simple actions you can take to reduce the risk of fire when using a fire pit or other outdoor fire:

- Fire pits and other outdoor fires should be kept **CLEAR** of structures or foliage for a distance of 3 metres. **DO NOT** place on a flammable surface.
- Always have water or a fire extinguisher ready to put out accidental fires.
- Completely **PUT OUT** fire pits and other outdoor fires when you are finished. **Soak it. Stir it. Soak it again.**
- Always have a responsible adult **WATCH** and control the fire. Only burn clean, dry, well-seasoned wood.
- Always **WATCH** children and pets around fire pits and other outdoor fires.
- **MONITOR** the weather and conditions. **DO NOT** use a fire pit or other outdoor fire if there is a Total Fire Ban.

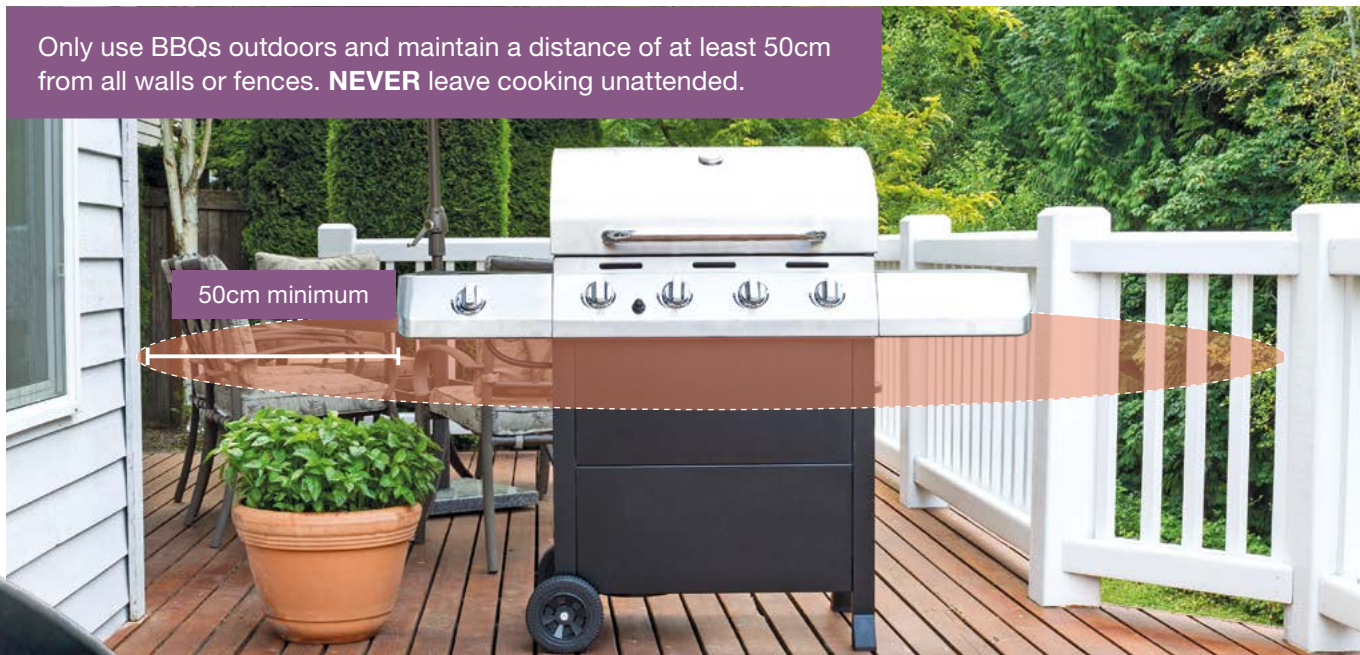
(Go to fire.tas.gov.au for information on Total Fire Bans and other fire restrictions.)



To find out more, and download the **Outside the Home Fire Safety Fact Sheet**, go to **Home Fire Safety** at fire.tas.gov.au

See also: Using Fire Outdoors booklet available at tfseducation.com.au

Only use BBQs outdoors and maintain a distance of at least 50cm from all walls or fences. **NEVER** leave cooking unattended.






Ensure the gas hose attached to the BBQ is not damaged, and that connections are tight. Check for leaks with soapy water. **Always turn off gas at the cylinder when not in use.**



Store flammable liquids, such as petrol, in a garage or shed in a sealed container designed for that purpose. Keep out of reach of children and away from ignition sources.

Hot tips






-  Regularly clean your BBQ of grease and fat build-up, including the drip tray.
-  **DO NOT** use a barbecue inside your home, garage or other enclosed areas due to the potential build-up of harmful smoke and fumes.
-  If you no longer require chemicals, dispose of them correctly and safely.

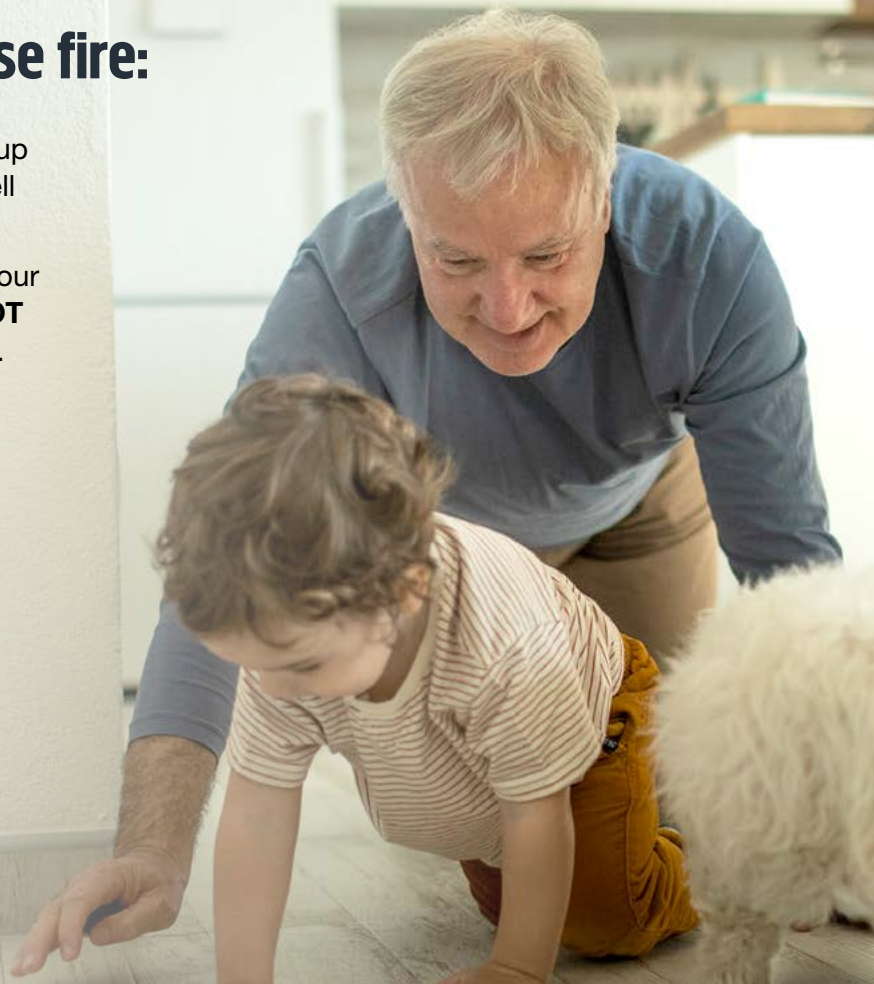


What to do in a fire

Actions that could save your life.

If you are caught in a house fire:

-  Crawl low under smoke. **DO NOT** stand up in the smoke. Smoke may harm or kill well before a fire spreads.
-  **Crawl on your hands and knees** with your arms straight and elbows locked. **DO NOT** get too low by crawling on your stomach.
-  **Feel doors** gently with the back of your hand before touching a door handle. They may be hot.
-  **Close doors behind you** to slow the spread of a fire.
-  **Remember: Get out and stay out.** **DO NOT** go back inside for possessions or pets.
-  **Call Triple Zero (000)** when you are out and clear of the fire. Wait at your safe meeting place for firefighters to arrive.



If your clothes catch on fire:



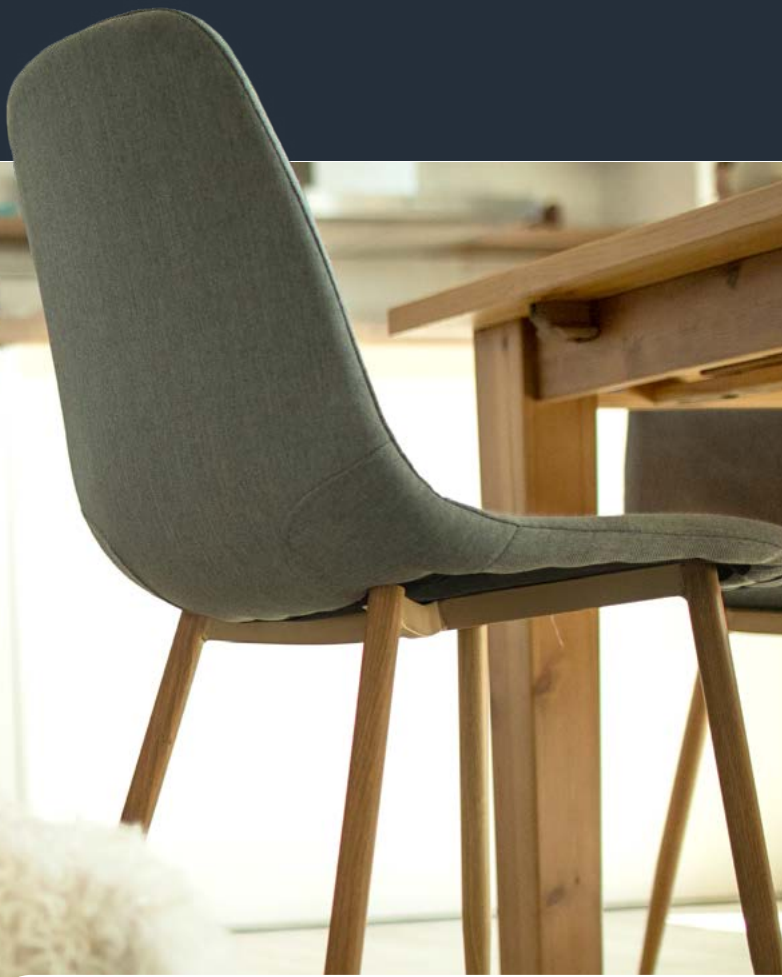
Stop what you are doing right away. Cover your face with your hands.







Drop gently to your knees, then lie down on the part of your clothes that are on fire.

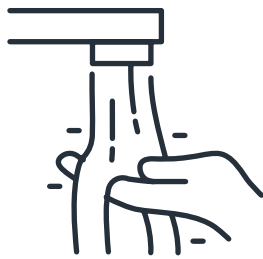


Rock and roll back and forth on the ground until your clothes stop burning.



If you are burnt:

-  **Remove** any clothing or jewellery from near the burn carefully, unless it is stuck to the skin.
-  **Cool** the burn for **at least 20 minutes** under cool gently running water. **DO NOT** use any ice or ointments.
-  **Cover** the burn with a clean dressing or towel.
-  **Seek** medical attention as soon as possible for burns larger than a 20 cent coin. For serious burns **call Triple Zero (000) immediately.**






Watch the KidSafe Burns First Aid video, a collaboration between KidSafe Australia, the Tasmanian Health Service Burns Unit, Australian Red Cross, Interplast, and Tasmania Fire Service.

In an emergency call Triple Zero (000)



Only call Triple Zero (000) in an emergency which is life threatening or where time is critical.




-  Ask for Fire, Police or Ambulance.
-  **Stay calm.** Don't shout. Speak slowly and clearly.
-  When asked, give your location, including **State, Street number and name, Suburb, Nearest cross street.**

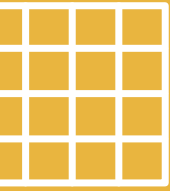
If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, there are six ways of contacting emergency services:



- By TTY – dial 106.
- By internet relay – and ask for Triple Zero (000).
- By captioned relay – and ask for Triple Zero (000).
- By SMS relay – text 0423 677 767.
- By video relay (Skype) – select one of the National Relay Service contacts.
- By ordinary phone – dial 1800 555 727 and ask for Triple Zero (000).

Hot tips

-  **Remember: Get out and stay out.** Get out of a house on fire as quick as possible. **DO NOT** go back inside for possessions or pets.
-  If you can't crawl, try to stay low, under the smoke. The higher you are in smoke, the greater the risk.
-  Make sure your children know what an alarm sounds like and what to do if it goes off.



Home fire escape plan

Possibly the most important plan you will 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 from a house fire.

- Make a **home fire escape plan** and **practise** it at least twice a year.
- Try and have at least **two ways out** of your house.
- **Use windows** as an alternative means of escape if safe to do so.
- **Close doors behind you** to prevent fire and smoke from spreading.
- Have one **Safe Meeting Place** outside your home (for example, your letterbox).



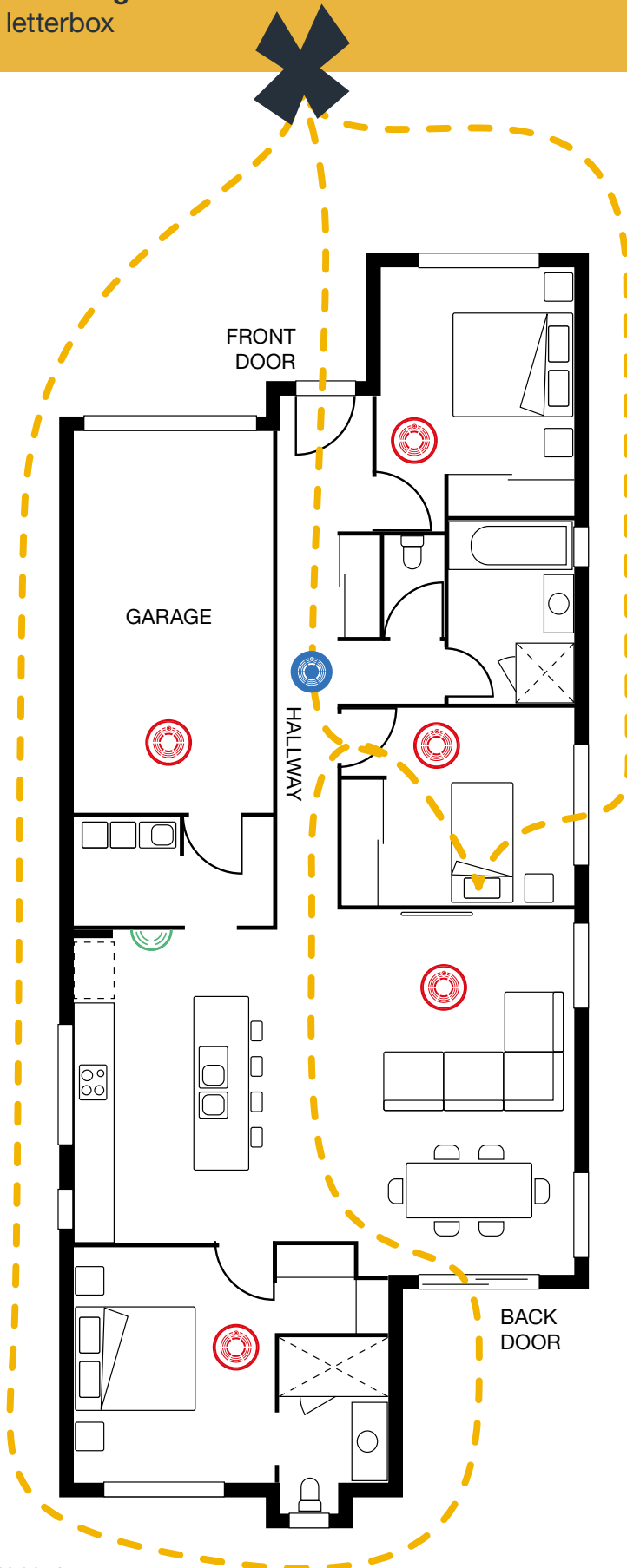
To find out more information on Home Fire Safety and Escape Plans go to Home Fire Safety at fire.tas.gov.au

Sample home fire escape plan

Safe Meeting Place
e.g. letterbox



You can start your plan using the grid on the other side of this page.



Required by law: A smoke alarm in all hallways. A smoke alarm at the top of all stairways in multi-storey homes.



Tasmania Fire Service recommends: Smoke alarms in these extra locations.



Tasmania Fire Service recommends: Carbon monoxide alarms for gas appliances and wood heaters.



Hot tips



Make sure you can get out of your home quickly if there is a fire.

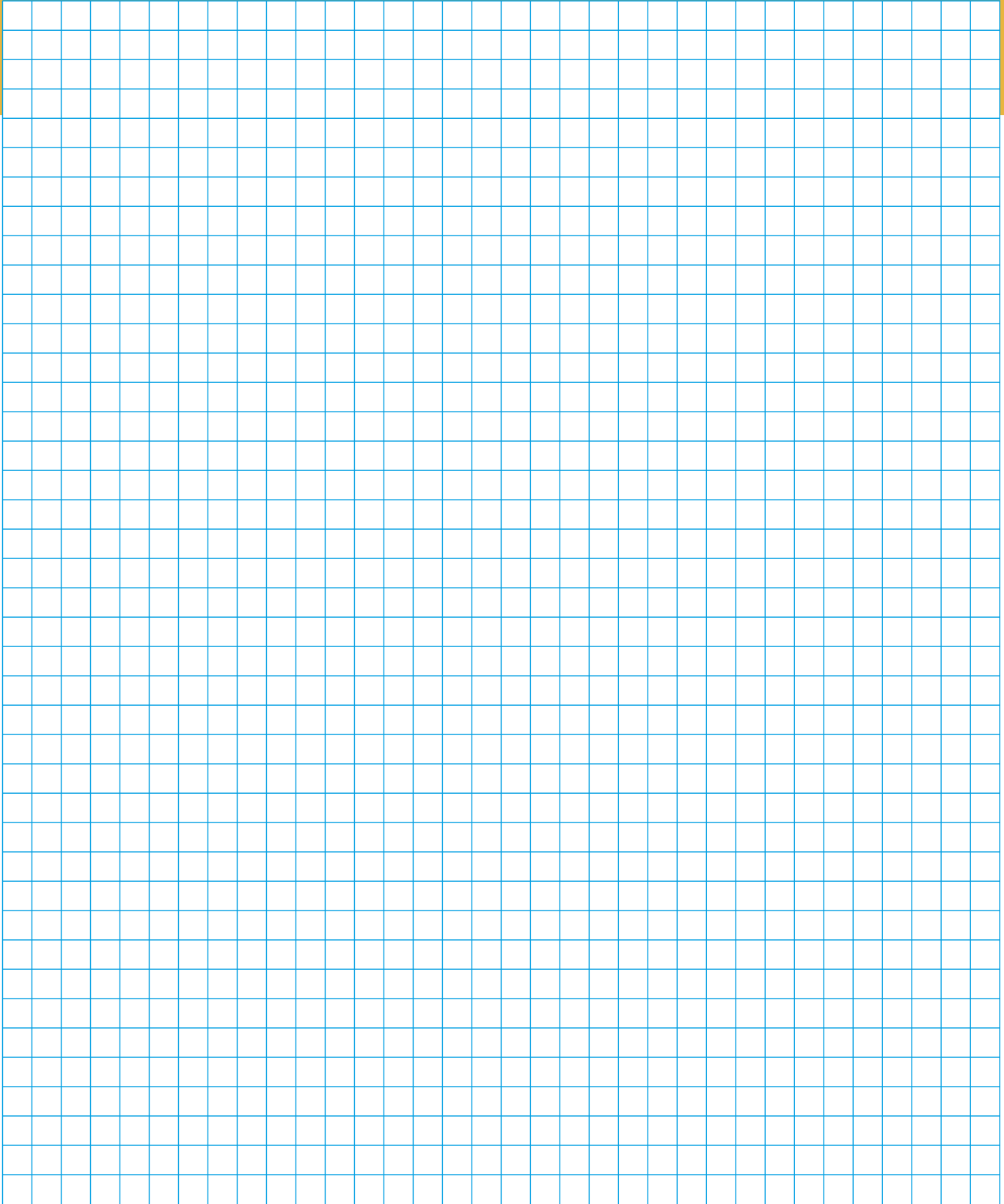
The best fire escape plan is worthless if you are locked in. Keep keys in deadlocks when you're at home.



Make sure your house number is clearly visible from the street.

Home Fire Escape Plan

Draw a plan using the grid below and mark in the exits you could use in a fire emergency. Remember to include **2 safe ways** out of your house to your **Safe Meeting Place**. See a sample plan on the other side of this page. **Detach your plan and put it on your fridge.**



Remember to:

Get OUT and STAY OUT!

Go to your safe meeting place

Dial 000

Other resources



Caravans, boats and mobile property

Be safe no matter where you sleep.

The home fire safety messages in this booklet - including the use of smoke alarms - apply to all places you may sleep, not just houses.

There are some special considerations for caravans, boats and other mobile property.

Our **Caravans, boats and mobile property** Fact Sheet explains how to be fire safe in these special circumstances.



See the fact sheet at fire.tas.gov.au

Fire extinguishers and fire blankets

Tasmania Fire Service recommends that every home has a fire extinguisher and fire blanket. **Only use them if you think it is safe to do so.**

In the event of a fire in the home, it's important to prioritise safety and act fast. Fire extinguishers and fire blankets can be effective at putting out small fires in their early stages.

Our **Fire extinguishers and fire blankets** Fact Sheet explains this fire safety equipment in more detail.



See the fact sheet at fire.tas.gov.au



Fire safety for children

It's important that children know about home fire safety. The Tasmania Fire Service School Fire Education program delivers key fire safety messages to Tasmanian primary school aged children.

Check out our TFS Kids website with interactive activities.



For more information: tfseducation.com.au



Activities and resources for kids: tfskids.com.au

Fire safety checklist



- Have working smoke alarms and test and clean them regularly.
- Plan and practise a home fire escape plan.
- Keep looking when cooking.
- Only plug in one electrical device per power board outlet (no double adaptors).
- Unplug devices once they are fully charged.
- Only charge devices using the approved manufacturer's charger.
- Keep exits clear.
- Keep all items that may burn at least 2 metres away from heat sources.
- Keep lighters, matches, candles, incense, oil burners and cigarettes out of reach of children.
- Store chemicals safely away from ignition sources and out of reach of children.
- Leave keys in locked doors when you are home so you can escape if a fire occurs.



Learn more at:
fire.tas.gov.au

See also [tfseducation.com.au](https://www.tfseducation.com.au)
Free-call 1800 000 699



Also available:



Visual Guide to Home Fire Safety



After the fire



Using fire outdoors



Fire Incidents and Warnings:

[TASALERT.com](https://www.tasalert.com)



While the State Fire Commission has made every effort to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information contained in this booklet, the State Fire Commission does not accept any responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or relevance to the viewer's purpose of the information contained in this booklet, and those viewing it for whatever purpose are advised to verify its accuracy and to obtain appropriate professional advice.

The State Fire Commission, its officers, employees and agents do not accept any liability, however arising, including liability for negligence, for any loss or damage resulting from the use of, or reliance upon, the information contained in this booklet.

© Copyright Tasmania Fire Service 2024

2024 v2 | 240048.14