



Fire Safety Checklist for Carers

Aim

The aim of this checklist is to assist carers in identifying vulnerable people who are at a greater risk of fire and possible steps to take to reduce the risk.

Fires can be devastating. Some people have a higher than average likelihood of falling victim to accidental fires. Many of these people may be known to, or come into contact with, professionals and volunteers from a wide variety of services and agencies.

Whilst Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service targets individuals who are at a greater risk of fire, they also seek to work with other services and agencies to help in the identification of such individuals to ensure that fire safety advice is given and steps are taken to reduce those risks.

This reference guide includes information that a carer can use to identify:

- high risk individuals whose profile indicates they may be more likely to experience a fire
- the signs that indicate a heightened risk of fire and
- what action to take if they have identified such concerns



High Risk Indicators, Behaviours and Characteristics

Carers should be looking for any risks, behaviours or characteristics that could increase the risk of an accidental fire, and effect an individual's ability to respond or escape from fire. This can also affect the carers workplace and safety whilst carrying out their duties

Risk of fire

- High risk individuals may have a combination of certain characteristics that indicate an increased risk of a fire starting. In the event of a fire they indicate an increased likelihood of an injury or fatality
 - Smoking in bed and unsafe smoking
 - Using heaters to dry clothing, towels, etc.
 - Unsafe cooking
 - Overloaded electrical extension leads
 - Using portable heaters
 - Hoarding
 - Dementia
 - Alcohol or drugs

Ability to Respond

- High risk individuals may have a reduced ability to respond to an alarm or fire, they may have a mental disability, be taking prescribed medication or have a progressive illness such as dementia that may impact upon their comprehension of a potentially life threatening situation, thus, hindering their response to an alarm.
 - Some mental health issues
 - Learning difficulties
 - Drinking Alcohol
 - Using prescription or recreational drugs
 - Progressive illness such as Dementia

Ability to Escape

- High risk individuals may have a reduced ability to escape should a fire occur, they may be bed bound or have mobility issues that will hinder their quick escape from a harmful situation
 - Being bed or chair bound
 - Needing mobility aids
 - Frailty
 - Forgetful
 - Previous falls
 - Live alone



Hazard identification guide

This guidance is designed to assist carers by suggesting some potential hazards to look for in the home. It is **not** an exhaustive list and your own observation skills should also be employed.

NOTE: If the characteristics of the resident, their lifestyle or their accommodation prevents you from lowering fire risk to acceptable levels – Please INFORM YOUR MANAGER and contact Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to arrange a Safer Home Visit (with residents' consent)

Area	Checks	Actions
Smoking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does anyone in the house smoke? Do they use an appropriate ashtray and dispose of their cigarettes and smoking materials correctly? Is there evidence of careless disposal of smoking materials? Does anyone smoke in bed? Does anyone in the house take prescription/other drugs likely to make them drowsy fall asleep whilst smoking (also consider alcohol)? Where are matches and lighters stored? Is anyone in the house a home oxygen user? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give safe smoking advice e.g. If possible smoke outside, use a stable ashtray and ensure cigarettes are stubbed out properly/wetted. Never to smoke in bed. Take extra care if tired, taking medication, or have been drinking. Would fire retardant bedding/nightwear further reduce risk for resident? Does the resident have telecare? If risk to resident is high recommend telecare is linked to smoke detection. Use lighters if possible and ensure all smoking materials/lighters/matches are always out of the reach of children. Never smoke if using oxygen.
Cooking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a build-up of fat and grease on the oven/hob/cooker hood? How does the oven light? Is anything combustible stored close to the cooker (tea towels, kitchen roll, spirits)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooker should be kept clean as fat/other food can ignite. Use of a spark device for gas cooker. Use alternative storage for combustibles where possible.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is a microwave used? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Never put foil or anything metal in the microwave or use it to dry anything.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the toaster placed away from anything that can catch fire? Build-up of crumbs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend relocation of toaster, away from any potential fuel source. Toaster should be regularly emptied as build-up of crumbs can ignite.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is cooking ever left unattended? This is increasingly important if resident appears to be prone to forgetfulness, falling asleep (drinking alcohol or taking medication). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise that when cooking, it is safer to take pans off the heat and turn off hob and/or grill if leaving the kitchen. Advise about the dangers of distractions when cooking e.g. answering phone/front door/attending to children/pets etc. Don't cook if tired or been drinking alcohol. Consider alternative meal arrangements e.g. 'meals on wheels'.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is hot oil used for cooking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give advice on safe use of cooking with hot oil <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not overfill pan (no more than one third full) and ensure food is dry before putting into the hot oil. Recommend use of an electronic deep fat fryer if possible.
Candles and naked flames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the resident use candles, incense and oil burners? Where are they sited? Are they in stable, heat resistant candle holders? Are candles used as substitute lighting? Are there any children/pets in the property? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend candles are held securely in a proper heat resistant candle holder on a stable surface. Keep away from curtains/fabrics/flammables. Recommend candles are put out when leaving a room. If using candles as substitute lighting source (fuel poverty) recommend contacting energy company to seek help with bills. Place away from where children/pets may knock over.
Heaters (all)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for seats/drying racks/curtains/hoarded materials in relation to heaters/fire? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum safe distance for siting or storing combustible items such as papers/clothing =1m/3ft from heat sources. Clothes should never be dried on heaters and never closer than 3ft/1m from open fires.
Portable heaters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are portable heaters secured? Where are gas heater cylinders stored? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend heater secured against a wall if possible to stop it falling over. Always turn off heater and allow to cool before moving it. Store cylinders outside when possible and follow disposal/recycling guidelines after use.
Open fires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is chimney swept? Is a fire guard used? Are logs stored next to burner? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend chimney is swept by a specialist (at least once a year for coal, twice if burning logs). Recommend use of fire guard to protect against sparks and embers (small children and pet protection too). Store logs away from burners, radiated heat can cause them to burn. Before going to bed ensure fire is under control and guarded or put out.
Electrical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check the fuse box for any evidence of charring or smell of burning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend immediate consultation of an electrician/electrical supplier if there is any doubt.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overloaded sockets and any scorch marks on plug sockets. Worn/damaged cables. Cable drum extension leads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain issues re: overloading, replacement of worn cables. Recommend fused 'in-line' adaptors and extension leads and explain how not to overload. Unwind cable drum completely to avoid overheating.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformers (mobile phone chargers or laptop power leads). Imitation chargers. E-cigarettes – charging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure transformers are not covered by clothes/carpet/fabric. Don't charge electric appliances/items overnight. Highlight dangers of imitation chargers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light switches, lighting/wall and reading lamps. How far are any light bulbs positioned from fabrics (armchair, curtains)? Are lights/lamps used to dry materials? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any flickering, evidence of charring, burning smell: recommend immediate consultation of an electrician. Minimum safe distance should be inside the lampshade or on the bulb holder. If in doubt, suggest 3ft/1m. Advise resident that radiated heat can cause fire, remove any drying materials from lighting.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hairdryers, straighteners and tongs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be left to cool off away from any combustible materials or fabrics (carpet, curtains, tissues). Keep unplugged when not in use
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to resident about 'Register my appliance'. Talk to resident about 'Product Recall'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is where owners who have acquired specific models of appliances within the last 12 years register their contact details so manufacturers can issue safety updates or repair notifications to the right homes. This is where owners can check for details of faulty electrical products.
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any mirrors, lenses or other reflective surfaces close to the window? Are any of the windows escape routes? Do they open? Does everyone know where the keys are kept? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check for direction of sunlight and potential reflection. If problematic, recommend removal of offending items. Consider advice if windows are part of escape plan depending on what floor they are on. Advise that the resident keeps keys to any locked windows in the same room, in a safe, place accessible to the resident.
Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do fire doors close automatically and fully? Are they wedged open? Are the escape routes congested/blocked? Are keys for doors easy to find – does everyone in the house know where they are kept? Does the resident close all doors when sleeping? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the extra protection given by fire doors and the reason why they need to be closed. Advise on keeping escape routes clear. Keep keys in a place where everyone who lives in the house can find them. Recommend all internal doors are closed overnight but ensure that smoke alarms will still be heard in the event of a fire.
Sleeping Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there any sign of careless disposal on bedding (scorching or burns)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise resident not to smoke in bed and explain risks. Advise use of fire retardant bedding(FRB)/night wear – ensure that FRB is added to any Care Plan and Resident Risk Assessment, and that the client/carer are advised that the bedding on the clients bed is FRB at all times



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there the facility to make an emergency call (phone, mobile, emergency alarm)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend having a phone in the room, or, if appropriate, a personal emergency alarm (may need to inform social services).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the resident use an electric blanket? • How old is the blanket? • Wear and tear? • Where is it stored if not in use? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unplug blanket before getting into bed unless it has a thermostat control and is designed to be left on when the resident is in bed. • Never use with air flow pressure relief mattress or paraffin based emollient creams. • Blanket should be replaced every 10 years (at a minimum) or immediately if damaged. • If not in use, should be stored flat or rolled up loosely to prevent damage to wiring.
Escape plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route • Door and window keys • Consider if any characteristics affect the ability to react to fire alarms – Dementia, some learning difficulties, poor hearing, drugs or alcohol. • Mobility of resident(s) • Facility to make emergency call 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for second route in case normal route out is blocked • Keep keys where everyone can find them • Ensure that the smoke detection is sufficient and of the correct type to provide early warning and when appropriate summon help • Ensure mobility aids and methods of calling for help are close to hand • Review plan if circumstances change • Practice
Escape Route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is escape route clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise resident to keep areas used as means of escape clear of clutter

It remains the responsibility of the commissioned service to eliminate or reduce the risk of client harm as far as is reasonably practicable. Any request for Fire and Rescue Support will be actioned as soon as possible but we do not offer a 24 hr service. Immediate high risks must be actioned by the referring agency to protect life.

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-safety-in-the-home/check-if-youre-eligible-for-a-safer-home-visit/>

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Prevention Team 01473 260588