

Fire Safety in Houses, Apartments and Duplexes

Please note that the following information has been kindly given to us by the National Safety Council – their website address is: www.nsc.ie

Fire Safety in Apartments Duplexes

Three Golden Rules

- 1: Take sensible safety measures around your flat to avoid fire hazards.
- 2: Install at least one smoke alarm on each floor level.
- 3: Plan your fire evacuation drill - and practice it.

Look Around - Prevent Fire

Look around your dwelling. Look at your day-to-day activities in it. Can you make it safer? Use this leaflet as a checklist to prevent fire in your flat.

In the Living Room

- Always place an effective spark guard in front of an open fire. Keep the area around a fireplace clear of newspapers, clothes or other combustible items. Don't air clothes in front of an open fire and remember - your chimney needs to be cleaned at least twice a year.
- Make sure all electrical leads and plugs are free from deterioration and fraying. Avoid over loading sockets - stick to one plug per socket. Switch off and unplug all appliances when not in use, except those specially made to operate full time. Don't try electrical repairs yourself - call a qualified electrician.
- Place portable heaters well clear of furniture and curtains. Check the instructions for their proper use. Never move gas, oil or electric heaters when in use. Always make sure there is adequate ventilation where heaters are used.
- If there are people who smoke in your flat use large, stable ashtrays. Hot ash can smolder for hours before igniting, for example on an armchair. Keep matches and lighters well out of reach of children.

In the Kitchen

Most fires start in the kitchen. Keep a suitable fire extinguisher or fire blanket in a handy place. If the cooking area is part of your living room, make sure it is positioned well away from the door to allow your escape if necessary.

- Don't let grease build up on the cooker, and keep electric flexes well clear of cooking rings and hobs. Remember - pots and pans should be placed on the cooker with handles turned in, but not over other rings.
- Your chip-pan should not be more than one-third full. If your cooking oil does catch fire, use a fire blanket, but never put yourself at risk. Don't try to move the pan, and never use water on a chip-pan fire.

- Always check that the cooker is off last thing at night. Finally, use the cooker only for cooking, never for heating or drying clothes.

In the Bedroom

- Make sure your electric blanket is used according to manufacturer's instructions, and check it regularly for wear and damage. When storing, roll rather than fold it.
- A properly working flashlight beside your bed is useful for emergency light at night.
- Never smoke in bed as it is one of the most dangerous fire hazards and should be avoided completely.

The Smoke Alarm - An Invaluable Friend

- Most fires happen at night when people are asleep. Your chances of dying or being injured in a fire are cut dramatically by the smoke alarm's early warning system. It gives you a vital time to act before fumes or smoke can build up.
- Position an approved smoke alarm where you can hear it clearly all over the flat. In larger flats, you may need more than one smoke alarm. Test your smoke alarms regularly.
- If your smoke alarm sounds, or if one goes off elsewhere in your building, never assume it's a false alarm - always act immediately. Better to be safe than sorry.

Plan Your Escape - and Practice it

Often when fire breaks out, so too do confusion and error. If you have a well-practiced fire evacuation plan, you will be better able to deal with an emergency situation. Know exactly what you're going to do in the event of a fire.

Your Fire Drill at a Glance

Plan two escape routes from each room.

Close all doors behind you as you leave.

Warn other residents by pounding on their door as you pass.

If your clothes catch fire - stop, drop and roll.

Move quickly to get outside the building without using lifts.

Do not re-enter for any reason.

Phone the fire brigade from a nearby phone.

Always make sure that your main escape route is clear and easy to use. For example, make sure your door is easy to open and if you need to rely on a window, be certain you can open it. If you are trapped in your flat by smoke, heat or fire, close the room door and seal all cracks with sheets or clothing. Attract attention by waving a sheet or piece of clothing near the window. Get down on your hands and knees where the air is cleaner and cooler.