**Making your home safe**

**It’s easy to make your home safe from a fire**

Here are a few things you can do.

**Smoke Alarms**

**Smoke alarms save lives. Protect your family with smoke alarms.** Fires start quietly and grow quickly. Far more New Zealanders die from being overcome by smoke than from fire itself. When you are asleep, you can’t smell smoke so an alarm is a priceless early warning system.

* **You don’t know** where a fire will start so you should have smoke alarms in every hallway, bedroom and living area, and on every level of your home.
* **Install them** on the ceiling as close to the centre of the room as possible. For more information about where to place smoke alarms, check out [**www.fire.org.nz**](http://www.fire.org.nz)or contact your local fire station.
* **Are your smoke alarms working?** Dust in the smoke alarm can stop it from working and cause nuisance false alarms. Gently dust the smoke alarm with a vacuum cleaner brush every six months.
* **Test smoke alarms each month** by pushing the test button to ensure it beeps. Change the battery when the unit starts ‘cheeping’. A good practice is to change your smoke alarm batteries when you change your clocks for daylight saving.
* **Replace** any smoke alarms that are not working.
* **Smoke alarms** and specialist equipment are also available for the hearing impaired. Contact your local fire station.
* **The New Zealand Fire Service Recommend Photo Electric long life smoke alarms.**

**Cooking**

* **Never leave cooking unattended.** Unattended cooking is the leading cause of house fires and is responsible for 33% of all fire fatalities in New Zealand. If you need to leave the room, even for a minute, turn the stove off.
* **Never throw water on a frypan that’s on fire** or try to carry it outside. Use a pot lid or a large flat object like a chopping board, or wet tea towel and place it over the pan to starve the fire of oxygen.
* **If you do have a fire** on your stove, try (if you can), to turn the power or gas off either at the stove or the mains.
* **Regularly clean your stove** to prevent the buildup of spilled fats and burnt foods which can cause fires. If you have a rangehood, clean the filters regularly. You can put these in a dishwasher to clean them.
* **Keep curtains, tea towels, oven mitts** and anything flammable well away from the cooking area. Wear tight fitting sleeves or roll them up when you are cooking.

**How to safely escape a fire**

**Smoke is poisonous, get underneath it by crawling along the floor as low as you can to get out.**

* **Smoke is poisonous,** get underneath it by crawling along the floor as low as you can to get out.
* **Shut the doors** behind you to stop the spread of fire if you can.
* **Get out and stay out** – never go back inside.
* **Shout Fire! Fire! Fire!** To warn others of the danger.
* **Gather** at your planned meeting place such as the letterbox
* **Phone 111** from a safe place tell the operator your:
* **House number**
* **Street**
* **Nearest intersection**
* **Suburb and city**
* **Rural ID number if you have one.**

**Wait** for the Fire Service to arrive and tell them where the fire is and if anyone is still inside.

**Get out alive - with an escape plan**

**Tips to remember when creating your escape plan.** Work out an escape plan to suit your home and talk about it with everybody in the house. Practice your escape plan at least every six months. Remember you need to:

* **Make sure your smoke alarms work** test them regularly
* **Know two ways** out of every room to escape from a fire
* **Make sure** the doors and windows needed to escape from a fire are easy to open and get out of. Also keep keys in deadlocks when you are at home (so that you can get out easily in a fire)
* **Have a safe** meeting place outside the letterbox or a safe tree

**Design your own escape plan online. Go to the Fire Safety section of www.fire.org.nz**