

Five surprising things that could increase the risk of fire at home

Firefighters in Devon and Somerset attend on average 973 house fires a year.

Here's the lowdown on the surprising fire risks in your home, and what you can do to reduce those risks.

1. Your smoke alarm

Your smoke alarm is only any good to you if it works. Pledge to keep yourself and your family safe by testing it once a week.

You should have a **working** smoke alarm on at least every level of your home. A smoke alarm is the easiest way to alert you to the first signs of a fire, giving you precious time to escape.

Two thirds of fire deaths in the south west happened where there was not a working smoke alarm*.

2. Cooking when you're not watching

The majority of fires in the home start in the kitchen, and are caused by cooking. More than half of the house fires we attend start in the kitchen.

Kitchen fires most often happen when:

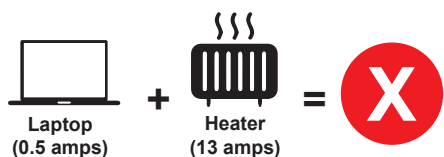
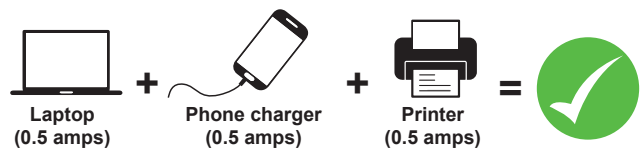
- You're distracted. Whether it is by pets, children, or tv, if you're not watching your cooking on the hob or under the grill, it could catch fire before you have had the chance to notice.
- Deep fat frying – hot oil can easily catch fire. If possible, only use a thermostat controlled deep fat fryer as they cannot overheat.
- Alcohol or drugs are involved – you won't be as careful when under the influence.

3. Extension leads

You may not realise but making a poor choice with extension leads can increase your risk of fire.

- Extension leads generate heat so should be used carefully – if you're using a wind-up type they should always be fully extended.
- If you need to use multi-socket adapters, never use these with high powered items such as kettles, heaters or hair straighteners.

Most extension leads have a 13 amp fuse which should not be exceeded. Four spaces doesn't mean four plugs!



* Please note that this is a guide and you should always check the individual amp rating of each appliance.



4. Charging electricals

In Devon and Somerset, 60 fires each year start from an electrical issue:

- Always use the charger that came with your device and don't buy a fake replacement.
- Charge your device (including laptops) on a hard, safe surface, and never on a carpet or bed. This also applies when using a laptop - always use it on a hard surface.
- Never leave a device charging unattended.

5. Faulty household appliances

Which household appliance is most likely to catch fire?

The most common household appliances to catch fire are tumble dryers and washing machines which cause around 60 fires each year in Devon and Somerset.

We attend around 12 fires each year caused by dishwashers, and 10 each year caused by fridges or freezers.

- Never leave appliances running when you are out, or asleep. This includes washing machines, tumble dryers or dishwashers.
- For appliances that are designed to remain on, such as fridges and freezers, please ensure they are in good working order and if you have any doubt or they are quite old, consider replacing.
- Use one socket per appliance. All of these appliances are powerful and use a lot of electricity, so should never be used with extension leads or multi-plug sockets. This will overload the socket and could cause a fire.
- Clear out lint from your tumble dryer after every use. Follow manufacturers' guidelines for cleaning and maintenance advice.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service offers a free home fire safety visit, or advice over the phone, to residents across Devon and Somerset.

To find out more and to book, call 0800 0502 999 visit www.dsfire.gov.uk/homesafety or text 07800 002476.



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