

safehome

checklist



Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) firefighters attend thousands of house fires each year. Many of these fires could have been prevented by taking some simple precautions.

Prevention is your best defence against household fires.



Use the checklist in this booklet to help identify the fire safety hazards in your home and take steps to make sure your home and family are protected.

For each topic relevant to your home, tick the box and read the associated notes. Make a list on page 22 of any improvements you could make to your home.



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UTILITIES CHECK



Electrical Safety Switch

- » Know the location of the electrical switchboard for your home.
- » Ensure an electrical safety switch is installed by a licensed electrician.
- » Test your electrical safety switch every three months. If a test fails, contact a licensed electrician for repairs immediately.



Gas Supply

- » Know where the gas isolation valves are located in your home. Undetected leaking gas can form an explosive mixture when combined with air.
- » Have all gas appliances serviced regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions.



Solar Panels

Solar panels are powered by the sun and other sources of light. They can continue to generate power even if the mains power has been disconnected, or the panels have been turned off at the switchboard.

Solar power systems can pose an electrical safety risk during emergency incidents, such as flooding and fires. If emergency services personnel attend your property, let them know that solar panels are installed.

Solar panels can continue to generate power even when switched off.





ELECTRICAL CHECK



Rechargeable Devices

- » Don't leave rechargeable electronic devices such as mobile phones, laptops, tablets or eReaders on charge or plugged in to charge for long periods of time.
- » Unplug portable devices from the main power source when you leave your home or go to sleep.
- » Only charge your devices on solid fire resistant surfaces such as a table or bench rather than soft surfaces like the couch or bed. Recharging devices can generate a large amount of heat that could cause a fire.



Power Points and Boards

Overloaded electrical circuits, faulty equipment and misuse of electrical equipment are common causes of fire and severe burns.

- » Do not overload power supplies by connecting double adaptors or linking power boards.
- » Use safety plugs in unused power points to prevent accidental contact.
- » Consider purchasing surge protection power boards to protect your items from electrical surge.



Electrical Leads

- » Do not place extension leads under carpet or rugs, or use while they are tightly coiled.
- » Replace any frayed or cracked extension cords.



Small Appliances

- » Check the leads on appliances are in good condition and not frayed or showing broken wires. Have cords repaired or dispose of the appliance before using.
- » Repair or dispose of malfunctioning electrical appliances immediately.
- » Keep electrical appliances clear of water.
- » Have small appliances like electric blankets, heaters, hair dryers and fans serviced by a licensed electrician in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- » When buying second hand appliances make sure they have been tested by a licensed electrician and have been certified as safe.
- » Never leave heating tools like hair straighteners unattended. The heating plates on a hair straightener can cause severe burns and potentially cause a fire. Keep out of reach of children.
- » Turn off appliances at the power point when not in use.
- » Do not place fans, heaters, laptops, computers, televisions and electrical equipment in areas with restricted airflow as overheating could occur.
- » Use all electrical equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.



Christmas Lights

- » Do not leave christmas lights on when you go out or go to sleep.
- » Do not put candles on a christmas tree.
- » Use indoor and outdoor lights for their intended purpose.
- » Replace any string of lights that have worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections.
- » Do not leave bulbs touching anything that can burn easily such as paper or plastic decorations.

Don't charge electronic devices on soft surfaces such as couches or beds.



Never leave your cooking unattended.



KITCHEN CHECK



Stove / Oven

Most fires in the kitchen start from cooking.

- » Never leave your cooking unattended.
- » Do not use a portable stove inside.
- » Keep your oven, stovetop, and rangehood filters clean of grease.
- » Keep flammable items such as tea towels, oven mitts, and curtains away from the cooking area.
- » When cooking, heat oil slowly and control any splatter.
- » Keep the saucepan lid nearby as it can be used to smother a fire.
- » Turn off hotplates and ovens when you have finished cooking and before you leave the room.
- » Place fire safety equipment such as a fire blanket or extinguisher between the stove and the exit.
- » Learn how to use your fire safety equipment.



If cooking oil catches fire, do NOT use water and do NOT pick up the pot.

Turn off the heat source, place the lid on the pot or use a fire blanket. Do not remove until the pot has cooled completely.

If the fire has spread beyond the cooktop, evacuate and call Triple Zero (000) immediately.



Microwave

- » Follow the manufacturer's instructions for installing and operating your microwave.
- » Do not use metal items such as metal containers, foil, or twist ties in a microwave as they can cause arcing which can create a fire.
- » Clean the microwave interior and door frame regularly to reduce the chance of fire.



If a fire starts in the microwave, immediately turn it off and, if safe, unplug the power cord. Do not open the microwave door until you are sure the fire is out.

If the fire starts to spread, evacuate the house and call Triple Zero (000) immediately.



Dishwasher

- » Make sure dishwashers are in good working order, properly installed and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions.



Electrical Appliances

Unplug your small kitchen appliances when not in use. Kitchen fires can easily start from faulty electrical connections or appliance malfunctions. Always stay in the kitchen and monitor your appliances when in use.

- » Toasters:
 - Unplug and clean the crumb tray in your toaster regularly to prevent fire during normal use. Remove any crumbs that become stuck to the heating elements.
 - An appliance cupboard with a roller door can catch and hold down the operating lever or a toaster, causing it to stay active and create a fire in the cupboard. Always unplug your toaster.
- » The heating element on a coffee machine can start a fire if the thermostat jams in the closed position. The heating element will get hotter and hotter until a fire starts.
- » Slow cookers have been known to cause fires when left unattended.



LIVING AREAS CHECK



Air Conditioners and Fans

- » Have old or heavily used appliances, like air conditioners and fans, checked regularly by a qualified tradesperson.
- » Keep appliances clean and free of dust by vacuuming filters regularly.



Heaters

- » Do not hang clothes, towels or blankets on the heater to dry them out or warm them up.
- » Always turn off your heater before going to bed or leaving the house.
- » Keep everything at least two metres away from heaters as a build up of radiant heat can cause a fire.
- » Choose a portable heater with an automatic safety switch that turns off if the heater is knocked over.
- » Before the weather gets cold each year, have your heater checked by a licensed electrician that it is safe to use.



*Always use the
correct light bulb
size, type
and wattage.*



Fireplaces

- » Have the chimney checked and cleaned every year to prevent a build up of flammable materials and ensure it functions correctly.
- » Use a screen with a fireguard on any open fire to protect from burn injuries and flying sparks or embers.
- » Never leave a fire unattended.
- » Extinguish a fire completely before leaving the house or going to bed.
- » Dispose of all fireplace ashes safely. Handle the ashes with metal scoops and metal buckets and soak in water.
- » Do not use flammable liquids to start an open fire.



Lights and Lamps

- » Always use the correct bulb size, type, and wattage in lamps, according to manufacturer's specifications. The incorrect bulb type can overload the internal wiring of the lamp and cause a fire.



Cigarettes and Ashtrays

- » Make sure all smoking materials are properly extinguished before disposing.
- » Use deep-sided ashtrays as an additional safeguard, and empty them regularly.
- » Never leave lit cigarettes unattended. Cigarettes falling onto furniture can easily cause a fire.
- » Keep matches and lighters out of sight and reach of children.
- » Never smoke in bed.
- » Check furniture for cigarette butts and ashes before going to bed. Cigarette embers can smoulder unnoticed and later burst into flame.
- » E-cigarettes can cause fires or small explosions from battery failures. Use only the charger provided with your e-cigarette, replace the batteries if they become wet or damaged, and do not leave your e-cigarette to charge unsupervised or overnight.





BEDROOM CHECK



Electric Blankets

- » Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- » Have your electric blanket inspected regularly by a qualified electrician.
- » Turn off the electric blanket when you go to bed or leave the house.
- » Do not place heavy objects on the bed while the electric blanket is in use.
- » Make sure the electric blanket is tightly secured and laid flat on the bed.
- » Store your electric blanket rolled up. Folding can damage the wiring.
- » Electric blankets are not recommended for use by young children where bed wetting may occur.
- » Never place a baby on an electric blanket – they can dehydrate and get burns at fairly low temperatures.



Candles, Incense and Oil Burners

- » Never leave a candle or naked flame unattended or leave it lit while you sleep.
- » Use in a safe place where they won't be knocked over and out of reach of children and pets.
- » Ensure candles are in suitable candle holders and placed on a fire resistant surface such as a ceramic, metal or glass plate.
- » Make sure there is clear space above and around the candle. Do not place candles under curtains, near paperwork, or on christmas trees.
- » Never spray an aerosol can near a candle or open flame.



LAUNDRY CHECK

Don't overload power points in the laundry.



Washing Machine

- » Don't overload the machine beyond capacity.
- » If possible, turn the washing machine off at the wall when not in use.
- » Don't overload power points in the laundry.



Clothes Dryer

- » Don't overload the machine beyond capacity.
- » Ensure there is proper ventilation and air space around the clothes dryer.
- » Remove lint from the clothes dryer filter after every load.
- » Regularly dust the grill, which may be at the back of the clothes dryer, to prevent dust build up and overheating.
- » Make sure that each load goes through a full cycle, giving the dryer an opportunity to cool down before starting a new cycle.
- » If possible, turn the dryer off at the wall when not in use.



Iron

- » Regularly check the electrical lead for fraying or exposed wires. Dispose of an iron with a damaged lead or have it repaired by a licensed electrician.
- » Do not leave an iron face-down on the ironing-board.
- » Unplug steam irons while adding water.
- » After use, unplug the iron and place out of reach of children and pets to avoid burn injuries.



SAFETY EQUIPMENT CHECK



Smoke Alarms

- » Once a month check the operation of your smoke alarms by pressing the test button. If you cannot reach the button easily, use a broom handle.
- » Clean your smoke alarms each month using the nozzle of a vacuum cleaner or soft brush. Smoke alarms must never be painted.
- » If cooking smoke sets off the alarm, do not disable it. Turn on the range fan, open a window or wave a towel near the alarm until it stops beeping, or use the hush button (if fitted).
- » If applicable, replace removable batteries annually. In most models when batteries are low the detector will sound a short 'BEEP' every minute or so. This is a reminder to replace the battery.
- » Smoke alarms more than 10 years past their manufacture date (stamped on the body of the alarm) must be replaced with a photoelectric smoke alarm compliant with Australian Standard AS3786-2014.

Find out more about smoke alarm legislation in Queensland by visiting www.qfes.qld.gov.au/smokealarms.

Fire Blankets

A fire blanket is a piece of fire-resistant fabric that can be used to smother a small fire or wrap around a person whose clothing is alight.

- » Store your fire blankets where they can be easily retrieved yet away from areas likely to catch fire. For example, store the fire blanket near the entrance to the kitchen not near the stove.
- » Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions located on the front of the cover.
- » Your fire blankets should be approved under Australian Standard AS/NZS 3504:2006 - Fire blankets.



Fire extinguishers

- » A Dry Chemical Powder (AB(E)) fire extinguisher is suitable for most household fires due to its effectiveness against most types of fires.
- » All fire extinguishers must comply with the Australian Standard AS/NZS 1841.1:2007 - Portable fire extinguishers - General requirements.
- » Store your fire extinguishers for easy retrieval yet away from areas likely to catch fire. Such as at the entrance to the kitchen, not inside the kitchen.
- » Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions and learn how to properly use the extinguisher.
- » Monitor the pressure gauge to ensure correct pressure.
- » Contact your local council for information on disposal options.



Security

Home security measures, such as deadlocks on doors and windows, may be necessary, however it is important not to let them trap you inside your home in an emergency.

- » Have one common key for all door locks, or install locks that do not require a key from the inside.
- » Keep a spare key where it cannot be seen or reached by intruders. For example, hang it in the middle of the back of a door.
- » Choose window security screens that can be opened from the inside.
- » Show all occupants, including overnight visitors, how to escape through security doors or windows if an emergency occurs.

Don't let your home security trap you in an emergency.





OUTDOOR CHECK



Street / Driveway

- » Make sure your street number is easily visible at day and night for emergency services.
- » Clear overhanging vegetation from power lines and structures.
- » If you live on an rural property, make sure there is:
 - Unrestricted gate access to the property.
 - Room for large vehicles to reverse in (approximately four metres wide)
 - Turning or passing areas for large vehicles.
 - Heavy vehicle access on cattle grids and bridges.
 - Two-wheel drive vehicle access.
 - An alternate way out for vehicles.
 - Water supply suitable for firefighter access such as a tank with a 50mm male camlock fitting with shut off valve or an accessible open water supply such as a dam or pool.



Structure/s

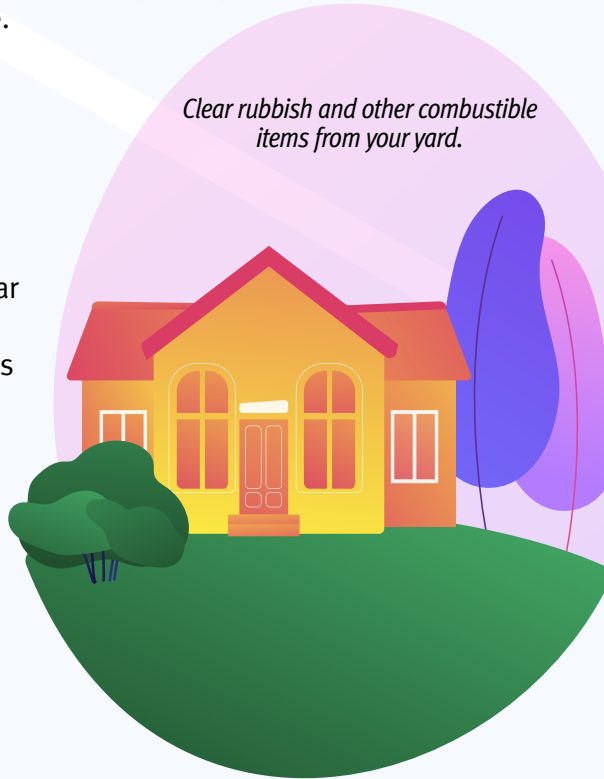
- » Clear gutters and roof of leaves, twigs, bark and other debris. Consider installing metal gutter guards.
- » Enclose open areas under decks and floors.
- » Install steel wire mesh screens on windows, doors, vents, and weep holes.
- » Seal gaps in roof and external cladding.
- » Remove or relocate flammable items away from your home (such as woodpiles, mulch, hanging baskets, and outdoor furniture).

Yard

Fires can start by embers collecting in crevices, scrub, or dead leaves on or near the house.

- » Clear rubbish and other combustibles from around the house.
- » Clear overhanging trees and shrubs situated close to the house, power lines and eaves.
- » Keep eaves and downpipes clear of leaves and debris.
- » Keep lawn trimmed and gardens maintained of loose debris.
- » Locate your street hydrant and ensure it is accessible to firefighters.
- » Have garden hoses that can reach all areas of the house when connected.

Clear rubbish and other combustible items from your yard.



Household Chemicals

- » Store chemicals out of the reach of children.
- » Always follow the directions on the label for usage, storage and disposal.
- » Avoid mixing common household chemical products.
- » Never store flammable products near sources of heat such as portable heaters, and barbecues.
- » Dispose of chemicals properly.
- » Do not transfer chemicals from one container to another.
- » Dispose of flammable materials such as oily rags, old newspapers and timber appropriately. Do not store them under the house, in the shed or carport.



Garage / Shed

- » Keep the shed securely locked.
- » Ensure your shed has adequate ventilation.
- » Properly dispose of flammable rubbish such as oily rags, and open or used containers of oil and solvents.
- » Store petroleum fuels and nitrogen fertilisers well apart. If combined, they can become an explosive mixture.
- » Do not use naked lights or smoke in the garage or workshop.
- » Always clean up shavings after woodwork.
- » Use properly installed electrical sockets for power tools. Avoid makeshift wiring extensions and double adaptors.
- » Where possible choose non-flammable paints, strippers, cleaners etc.
- » Where electric welders are used, ensure the working area is kept clear of flammable materials and the equipment is switched off and left safe after use.
- » Store chemicals in their original containers with their labels intact for proper safety information.
- » Flammable liquids:
 - Store flammable liquids such as petrol, kerosene, methylated spirits, paints and solvents well away from heat sources.
 - Petrol, kerosene and other flammable liquids must be kept in approved containers and clearly labelled.
 - Fuel lawnmowers and other motors outdoors only.
- » Pool chemicals:
 - Granular pool 'chlorine' (calcium hypochlorite) may start a fire if it comes into contact with fuels, oils, brake fluid or detergent. It reacts with acids to release the toxic gas chlorine. Store separately from pool acid (hydrochloric acid).
 - Liquid pool chlorine (sodium hypochlorite solution) also reacts with acid to release chlorine and must be stored separately from pool acid.
 - Do not mix different types of pool chemicals. Some combinations are incompatible and may cause fires or explosions.





Balconies

- » Smokers should use heavy, high-sided ashtrays made of glass, ceramic or metal to prevent them tipping over.
- » Always fully extinguish cigarettes.
- » Remove clutter from balconies and keep air conditioning units clear of any flammable items.



Barbecues

- » Regularly check and maintain barbecue fittings and connections.
- » Ensure there is adequate clearing around the barbecue when in use. 50cm of clearance from exterior walls, flammable items and any electrical ignition sources.
- » Never put flammable liquid on a barbecue.
- » Never leave your cooking unattended.
- » Once you have finished cooking, turn off or extinguish the barbecue to prevent burns. Allow to cool completely before replacing lid.
- » Remove all residual fat from the barbecue after each use.
- » Always store gas bottles outside, upright and away from sources of heat.
- » Supervise children at all times when using a barbecue.





PLAN AHEAD CHECK



Insurance



Do you have home and contents insurance? If your home was destroyed or damaged by a fire or emergency event, insurance can provide the financial resources to rebuild your life.

- » The Australian statistics:
 - 81% of homeowners and renters are underinsured - their insurance will not cover them to resume their same standard of living.
 - 74% of renters do not have contents insurance.
 - 10% of homes are insured to an out-of-date purchase price.
 - 53% of homeowners and renters do not update their contents insurance after purchasing a new high-value item.
- » Make an accurate calculation of what it would cost to rebuild your home and replace your contents in today's market.
- » Check your insured total to make sure all your belongings are covered. Don't just include large or expensive items such as furniture and televisions – include all your contents, such as clothing, linen, kitchenware, art, and toys. You can use an online tool to calculate an estimate.
- » Regularly review your sum insured particularly if you renovate your home or buy new furniture or appliances.
- » Take photos of valuable items and keep proof of purchase receipts to make replacement easier.
- » Take note of the circumstances that your insurance provides cover for:
 - Is your home at risk of natural disasters such as bushfire / flooding, or cyclone? Will it be covered in these instances?
 - Does your insurance include temporary accommodation? For renters, this could be included in your contents insurance should the property become unliveable.



Fire Escape Plan

Prepare a fire escape plan now so you know how to evacuate at a moment's notice. Smoke and fire spread quickly. If a fire breaks out you need to be able to get out fast.

- » Make sure that everyone knows the sound of the smoke alarm and what to do if they are activated.
- » Identify a primary escape route out of each room, then pick a secondary route in case the first is blocked by fire. You should have two ways to get out of every room.
- » Consider the needs of children, the elderly or anyone in the home who may need assistance.
- » Choose a meeting place outside of the house where your family will gather if you need to evacuate, such as the letterbox.
- » Ensure doorways and hallways are clear. It is easier to manoeuvre in low visibility if the escape routes are as clear as possible.
- » Be prepared to smash a window as a means of escape. Use a solid object to break the window, and place a blanket or soft furnishing against the window to protect yourself from the broken glass.
- » Practice your escape plan in different scenarios such as at night with the lights off. Use a timer to create a sense of urgency.



Important Documents

A major fire in your home can make it very difficult to regain your lifestyle.

- » Store your important documentation in one contained area for easy access in the event of an emergency. These documents could include:
 - Passports, driver's licence and identification.
 - Emergency contact numbers.
 - Insurance papers.
 - Property deeds.
 - Birth and marriage certificates.
 - Medical prescriptions.
 - Photographs and mementos.
- » You could also consider storing digital copies of these documents on a portable hard drive or use secure cloud storage.



WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

If your home has caught fire, you need to prioritise getting everyone out.

- » Alert others by shouting and thumping on walls.
- » Help children and anyone else needing assistance to evacuate.
- » Get down low and go, go, go. Crawl low to minimise breathing in toxic fumes and avoid blinding smoke, which normally build from the ceiling down.
- » Feel closed doors for signs of fire. Avoid opening the door if it is hot.
- » Close doors behind you to limit the spread of smoke or flames, if possible. Do not lock them.
- » If you cannot get out, move to the room furthest from the fire, preferably where you can be seen from the street. Close the door and place a rolled towel or clothing across the bottom to stop smoke from entering. Open a window and shout for help.

If your clothing catches fire, cover your face with your hands, drop to the floor and roll over and over so that your body smothers the fire.

Once you are outside:

- » Gather with your family members at your meeting place and check to make sure everyone is there.
- » Call Triple Zero (000) and ask for the fire service. Let them know if anyone is missing. Stay on the phone and don't hang up until the operator does.
- » **Do not go back into the burning building.**



EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

- 📞 In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000)
- 📞 State Emergency Service **132 500**
(for flood and storm assistance)
- 📞 Fire Bans and Restrictions
1800 020 440
- 🌐 qfes.qld.gov.au

Queensland Ambulance Service

- 📞 In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000)
- 🌐 ambulance.qld.gov.au

Queensland Police Service

- 📞 In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000)
- 📞 PoliceLink **13 14 44**
(for general enquiries)
- 📞 Crime Stoppers **1800 333 000**
- 🌐 police.qld.gov.au



Health and Hospital Information

- 📞 13 HEALTH (**13 432 584**)
- 📞 Poisons **13 11 26**

Energex

- 📞 To report dangerous electrical emergencies, call **13 19 62**
- 📞 To report faults or loss of supply, call **13 62 62**

Ergon Energy:

- 📞 To report dangerous electrical emergencies, call **13 16 70**
- 📞 To report faults or loss of supply, call **13 16 70**

Road Traffic and Travel Information

- 📞 **13 19 40**
- 📞 Translink **13 12 30**

Schools

- 📞 Contact your children's school directly for information on closures.
- 🌐 education.qld.gov.au





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