safehome checklist



Queensland Government

Queensland firefighters attend thousands of house fires each year. Many of these fires could have been prevented by taking some simple safety steps.

Prevention is your best defence against fires at home.



Use the checklist in this booklet to help find the fire safety hazards in your home and act now to make sure your home and family are safe.

For each topic that applies to your home, tick the box and read the notes. Make a list of any improvement you could make to your home.

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UTILITIES CHECK

☐ Electrical Safety Switch

- Know where the electrical switchboard (also known as the meter box or power box) is for your home. You may need to turn off the power in an emergency.
- Make sure your home has a safety switch installed.
- Test your safety switch/s every three months. If a test fails, contact a licensed electrician for repairs.

☐ Gas Supply

- Know where the gas isolation valves are located at your home. Undetected leaking gas can be explosive when mixed with air.
- Have all gas appliances serviced as detailed in the instruction manual.

☐ Solar Panels

- Keep your solar panels maintained as detailed in the instruction manual.

In a storm, flood and fire emergency, solar panels can be a safety risk. If emergency services attend your property, let them know if solar panels are installed.



Visit electricalsafety.qld.gov.au to find out more about electrical safety at home.

ELECTRICAL CHECK

Appliances

- Only use electrical appliances for what they are meant for.
- Follow the safety instructions in the manual.
- Check the leads on appliances before you plug them in. Don't use if the cord is damaged - have cords repaired or dispose of the appliance.
- Keep electrical appliances away from water.
- Have small appliances like electric blankets, heaters, hair dryers and fans serviced by a licensed electrician as per the instruction manual.
- When buying second hand appliances make sure they have been tested by a licensed electrician and are certified as safe.
- Never leave heating tools like hair straighteners unsupervised. The heating plates on a hair straightener can cause severe burns and could cause a fire.
- Turn off appliances at the power point when not in use.
- Use fans, heaters, laptops, computers, televisions, and electrical equipment in areas with good airflow, to avoid overheating.

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 your power supply by connecting double adaptors or linking power boards.
- Use safety plugs in unused power points to prevent accidental contact.
- Consider using surge protection power boards to protect your items from electrical surge.

Electrical Leads

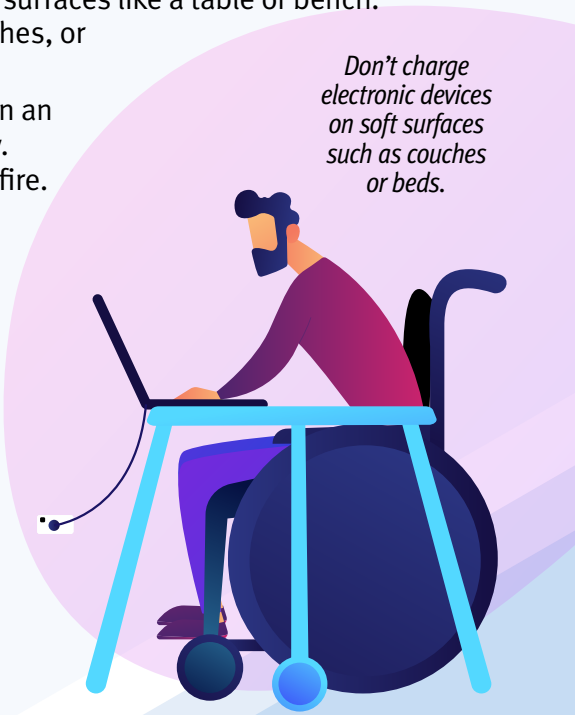
- Do not place extension leads under carpet or rugs, or use them while tightly coiled.
- Replace any frayed or cracked extension leads.

Rechargeable Devices

- Follow the instruction manual for charging your device and only use a charger recommended by the manufacturer.
- Don't leave rechargeable electronic devices charging for long periods of time, or without supervision. Only charge until the battery is full.
- Unplug rechargeable devices from the power point when you go out or go to sleep.
- Only charge your devices on hard surfaces like a table or bench. Never charge them on beds, couches, or blankets or in direct sunlight.
- Never charge a battery or device in an escape path, hallway, or doorway. You could be trapped if there is a fire.

Festive Lights

- Do not leave festive lights on when you go out or go to sleep.
- Do not use 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.



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

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, stove top, and range hood filters clean of grease.
- Keep flammable items such as tea towels, oven mitts, and curtains away from the cooking area.
- Keep the saucepan lid close 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 like 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, put 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 instruction manual for installing and using your microwave.
- Do not use metal items including containers and foil in a microwave as they can cause arcing which can start a fire.
- Clean inside the microwave 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 and call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

Dishwasher

- Make sure dishwashers are in good working order, properly installed and maintained according to the instruction manual.

Kitchen Appliances

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

- 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.
- Unplug your coffee machine. The heating element can start a fire if the thermostat jams in the closed position. It will get hotter and hotter until a fire starts.
- Unplug your slow cooker when you are not home. Slow cookers can start a fire when left unattended.

LIVING AREAS CHECK

Air Conditioners and Fans

- Have old or heavily used air conditioners and fans regularly checked by a licensed electrician.
- Keep them clean and free of dust by vacuuming filters regularly.

Heaters

- Do not hang clothes, towels or blankets on the heater to dry 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. Radiant heat can cause a fire.
- Choose a portable heater with an automatic safety switch that turns off if it is knocked over.
- Before the weather gets cold each year, have your heater checked by a licensed electrician.



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

Fireplaces

- Have the chimney checked and cleaned every year to prevent build up of flammable materials and make sure it functions properly.
- Use a screen with a fireguard on any open fire to protect against burn injuries and flying sparks or embers.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Put out fires completely before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Dispose of all fireplace ashes safely. Use metal scoops and 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 instructions. The incorrect bulb type can overload the internal wiring and cause a fire.

Cigarettes and Vapes

- Make sure all smoking materials are properly extinguished before disposing.
- Use deep-sided ashtrays 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.
- Vapes can cause fires or small explosions from battery failure. Only use the charger that came with your vape, replace the batteries if they become wet or damaged, and do not leave it to charge unsupervised or overnight.

BEDROOM CHECK

Electric Blankets

- Read and follow the instruction manual for your electric blanket.
- Have your electric blanket checked regularly by a licensed 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 in case of bed wetting.
- 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 candles in a safe place where they won't be knocked over. Keep them out of reach of children and pets.
- Place candles on a fire resistant surface like ceramic, metal, or glass.
- Make sure there is clear space above and around the candle. Do not place them near curtains or paperwork, or on bookshelves.
- Never spray an aerosol can near a candle or open flame.

LAUNDRY CHECK



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.
- Make sure there is proper ventilation and air space around the dryer.
- Remove lint from the dryer filter after every load.
- Regularly dust the grill, which may be at the back of the 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.

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



Test and clean your smoke alarms once a month.

Smoke Alarms

- Once a month check your smoke alarms are working by pressing the test button. If you cannot reach the button easily, use a broom handle.
- Clean your smoke alarms every month using a vacuum cleaner or soft brush.
- If cooking smoke sets off the alarm, turn on the range fan, open a window, wave a towel near the alarm until it stops beeping, or use the hush button (if fitted).
- If applicable, replace removable batteries each year. In most smoke alarms, when batteries are low it will make a short 'BEEP'. This is a reminder to replace the battery.
- Smoke alarms more than 10 years old must be replaced with a photoelectric smoke alarm compliant with Australian Standards.

Find out more about smoke alarm legislation in Queensland by visiting **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 on fire.

- Store your fire blankets 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 instructions on the front of the bag.
- 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. It is effective 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 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.
- Regularly check the pressure gauge to ensure correct pressure.
- Contact your local council for information on disposal options.

Security

Home security, such as deadlocks and security screens, may be necessary, but 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.
- Choose security screens that can be opened from the inside.
- Make sure everyone, including overnight visitors, knows how to escape through security doors or windows in an emergency.



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

OUTDOOR CHECK

Street / Driveway

- Make sure your street number can be seen from the road at day and night.
- 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)
  - Heavy vehicle access on cattle grids and bridges.
  - 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.

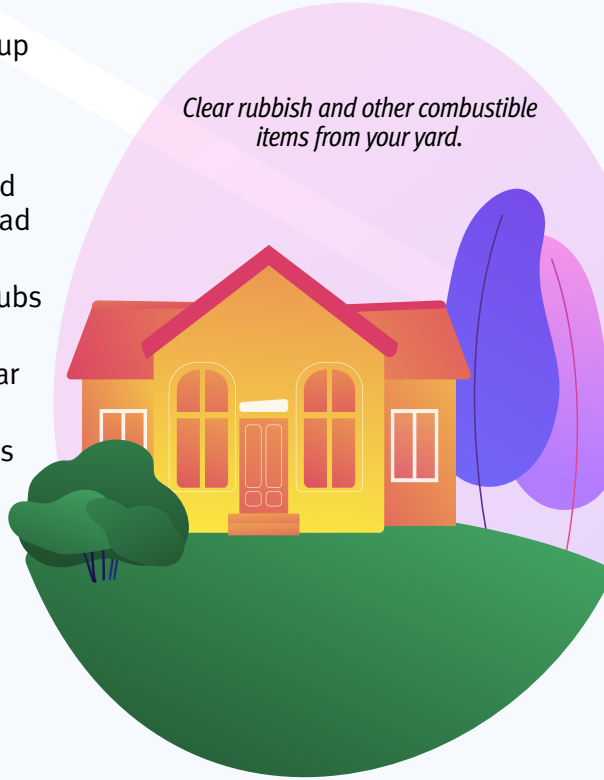
Structure/s

- Clear gutters and roof of leaves, twigs, bark and other debris. Consider fitting 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 flammable items away from your home (such as woodpiles, mulch, hanging baskets, and outdoor furniture).

Yard

Fires can start by embers lighting up scrub, or dead leaves on or near your home.

- Clear rubbish and other flammable items from your yard such as long dry grass, and dead leaves and branches.
- Trim overhanging trees and shrubs along access paths.
- 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 for firefighters.
- Have garden hoses that can reach all areas of your home.



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 appropriately. Do not store them under the house, in the shed or carport.

Garage / Shed

- Keep shed securely locked.
- Make sure your shed has good 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 create an explosion.
- Do not use naked lights or smoke in the garage or workshop.
- Always clean up shavings after woodwork.
- Charge rechargeable power tools in the shade. Unplug them when they have finished charging.
- 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 after use.
- 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.
  - Refuel lawn mowers and tools outside.
- 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

- Remove rubbish, clutter, and flammable items from balconies.
- Keep furniture away from exterior walls.
- Keep flammable items including clothing at least one metre away from air conditioning units.

Barbecues

- Regularly check and maintain barbecue fittings and connections.
- When using the barbecue, make sure there is at least 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.
- Clean the barbecue of all cooking fat and debris after use. Allow to cool before replacing the lid.
- Always store gas bottles outside, upright and away from sources of heat.
- Supervise children at all times when using a barbecue.



Make sure there is adequate space 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, insurance can help you rebuild your life.

- The Australian statistics:
  - 81% of homeowners and renters are underinsured - their insurance will not cover them to the 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.
- Whenever you change or renew your insurance, 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 technology. Think about clothing, linen, kitchenware, art, and toys. You can use an online tool to work out an estimate.
- Regularly review your insured sum 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 if there is an emergency?
  - Does your insurance include temporary accommodation? For renters, this could be included in your contents insurance should the home become unliveable.

Fire Escape Plan

Make a fire escape plan now so you know how to get out in an emergency. Smoke and fire spread quickly and you need to get out fast.

- Make sure that everyone knows the sound of the smoke alarm and what to do if they are activated.
- Identify an ideal escape path out of each room, then pick a back-up path in case the first is blocked by fire. Try to have two ways to get out of every room.
- Think about the needs of children, the elderly or anyone in the home who may need help escaping.
- Choose a meeting place outside of your home where you will gather if you need to evacuate, such as the letterbox.
- Keep doorways and hallways clear. It is easier to get out if your escape paths are as clear as possible.
- Be prepared to smash a window to get out. 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.
- Practise your escape plan in different scenarios like at night with the lights off. Use a timer to help you do it fast.

Important Documents

- Store your important documents in one place for easy access in 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.
- Think about storing digital copies on a portable hard drive or in secure cloud storage.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

If your home is on fire, the first step is to get out.

- Alert others by shouting and thumping on walls.
- Help children and anyone else needing help to get out.
- Get down low and go, go, go. Crawl low to minimise breathing in toxic fumes and avoid blinding smoke. Smoke and fumes are normally thicker at the ceiling.
- 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, go 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:

- Go to 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

000 EMERGENCY

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

THINGS TO DO

NOTES



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