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**Community
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Encouraging safety in the home: Emerging issues and raising awareness

Wales Safer Communities Network

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Cost of living crisis



Welsh Government fuel poverty estimates:

- Up to 45% (614,000) of households could be in fuel poverty following the price cap increase of April 2022.
- For households on lower incomes there could be significant increases with up to 217,700 (98%) predicted to be in fuel poverty following the price cap increase of April 2022

This is likely to lead to increased fire risk at home.



NFCC campaign: Steps to stay fire safe

- Encourages people to take simple steps in the home to protect themselves from accidental fires and carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Shares advice on heating appliances, carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, candles and electrical safety.



Heating your home

You may have had to change the way you heat your home. Follow our advice on using heating appliances to help stay fire safe.

Using portable heaters

Always read the instructions and understand how to use appliances safely, checking they're in good working order.

- Check portable heaters are not subject to a safety notice or product recall <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/product-recalls-and-alerts>



Plug electric heaters into a wall socket - not an extension lead.

- Don't place portable heaters where they will block your escape route or where they might be knocked over.
- Keep heaters away from flammable materials such as paper, curtains, furniture and bedding.
- Unplug heaters when you go out or go to bed.
- Only use gas or paraffin heaters in well-ventilated areas, having checked that they are suitable for indoor use. Make sure a CO alarm is installed in the same room.

TOP TIP:

Close internal doors at night. It will help keep your rooms warm and reduce fire and smoke spread if a fire starts.



Using open fires and woodburning stoves

Open fires and woodburning stoves can be a cost effective way of heating your home. Follow our advice to reduce the risk of a fire or CO incident in your home.

- Always use a fire guard with an open fire to protect against flying sparks from hot embers.
- Make sure embers are under control and properly put out before you go to bed.
- If you are re-opening an old fireplace you will need to consider building regulations. Get flues and chimneys checked and swept to prevent chimney fires and CO poisoning.
- Use the correct fuel for your fire. Burning household waste or material such as treated wood can cause toxic fumes in the home and is a fire risk.
- Store fuels for open fires and woodburning stoves away from the appliance so they don't catch fire.
- Fit a CO alarm in all rooms with fuel burning appliances or ensure your landlord has provided CO alarms as required by regulations.



Never dry clothes directly on or in close proximity to a heater or open fire.



Electrical safety

NFCC has worked closely with Electrical Safety First to identify the areas of concern and to ensure messaging is aligned.

[Cost of living – Electrical Safety First #SavingSafely](#)

[A Costly Saving: Highly Dangerous 'Energy Saving' Devices Put Consumers At Risk As Cost of Living Crisis Bites](#)

Additional campaign resources will be available in autumn with a focus on second hand electrical goods

Electrical Fire Safety Week beginning 14 November and will include a focus on cost of living and personal heating devices.

The main area we identified as a concern is time of use tariffs (specifically those which provide cheaper electricity when the household is likely to sleep). Modern tariffs are linked to smart meters and benefitted people using electric vehicles or with battery storage systems. But this could also encourage people to run white goods such as washing machines, tumble dryers or dishwashers overnight.

Due to high energy costs we appreciate that people on tariffs will run appliances overnight in an attempt to reduce bills.

Our advice is where it is **practically possible**, people should avoid leaving appliances such as washing machines, tumble dryers or dishwashers running unattended overnight.

If you have to run your appliances overnight it is imperative to follow the safety advice to reduce the risk of a fire:

- Make sure your home is fitted with working smoke alarms and test them regularly
 - [Register your appliances](#) with the manufacturer – even if they are older or second hand
 - Don't overload your plug sockets as this can lead to overheating
 - Clean all filters regularly as per the manufacturer's instructions
 - Check the cables and plugs of your appliances for any signs of wear and tear
 - If you're concerned about an appliance in your home, use [Electrical Safety First's online product checker](#) to see if has been recalled
 - If you think there might be a problem with your appliance, unplug it and contact the retailer, manufacturer or a qualified repair technician as appropriate
- These simple checks could save your life

It's important that people who are **not** on a time of use tariff don't run appliances unattended at night – electricity is not cheaper for them – it's a misconception not helped by recent social media posts with false information.

Electric blankets

Electric blanket advice is standard fire safety messaging and should include how to store and use safely, looking for defects, what to look for when buying.

If possible, FRSs could also look to run electric blanket safety checks in communities. This could be combined with partner activities to

Cost of living crisis



Bypassing electric and gas meters:

- Also known as energy theft, when an individual illegally tampers with their electricity or gas meter so that it doesn't record how much gas or electricity is being used.
- An issue in terms of safety, legally, compliance, housing management.

Gas dangers	Electric dangers
Lethal leaks and house fires	Shocks and severe burns
Catastrophic explosions	Electrical fires

Cost of living crisis



Bypassing electric and gas meters:

Stay energy safe: What to spot

<u>Gas</u>	<u>Electricity</u>
Meter has been turned back to front	Damaged casing
Smell of gas	Extra wires
Rubber piping	Melted meter
Dial has disappeared	Meter dials not working
Meter shows credit has run out but gas is still available	Burning smell

Diolch yn fawr.
Thank you.

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