

# Preventing house fires



## Keep your home and family safe

Accidental house fires can occur at any time of year. Gas or electric heaters, electric blankets or open fires during winter, as well as air conditioners and BBQ's during summertime can often pose a fire risk. It's nice to have a comfortable home during the warmer and cooler months, but it's also important to make sure you don't put your family, pets and home at risk of a house fire.

## Causes of house fires

It doesn't take much to spark an accidental fire at home at any time. In fact, some of the most common causes of house fires might surprise you. These include:

- › Flammable items sitting too close to heaters
- › Open fireplaces
- › Candles
- › Careless smoking
- › Unattended cooking
- › Electric blankets
- › Appliances being left on and unattended
- › Poorly maintained evaporative air-conditioners
- › Children playing with matches or lighters
- › Incorrectly installed down-lights
- › Dust build-up on power-boards
- › Overloading of power-boards

## Fires, facts and figures

- 1 The number of times each year you need to change your smoke alarm batteries
- 12 The number of times you should test your smoke alarm every year - once every month
- 80 The percentage of households in Australia who do not have sufficient home insurance cover\*
- 361 The number of house fire claims received by RAC Insurance between April 2014 - April 2015\*\*

\* Insurance Council of Australia \*\* RAC Insurance statistics

## How to prevent a fire in your home

Once a house fire has started, it can quickly spread to other areas of your home and cause devastating damage. Follow these simple tips to help keep your home safe throughout the year:

- » **Take action.** Test your smoke alarms every month. Mark a memorable date in your diary and change the batteries once a year. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) suggest 1 April.
- » **Be prepared.** Buy a fire blanket or extinguisher that meets Australian Standards. Keep them somewhere that's easy to access but also away from potential fire hazards.
- » **Heat and cool your home safely.** Check your fireplace brickwork, chimney and flue for built up dust, soot or ash before lighting a fire. Have your air-conditioner serviced every year to keep it in great condition.
- » **Be extra careful with open flames.** Make sure that you leave adequate clear space around your fireplace and candles to avoid any items catching fire.
- » **Keep lighters and matches away from children.** Educate your children about the importance of fire safety.
- » **Don't take shortcuts.** Always use licensed and qualified tradespeople when you install lighting, air-conditioning or heating systems.
- » **Mind your appliances.** Turn off and unplug your appliances when they're not in use and never leave them running when no one is home. Never leave food to cook unattended.
- » **Clean up.** Make sure your power-boards are free from dust as dust build up can act as an electrical conductor when there is moisture in the air. You can use blanking plugs to prevent this.
- » **Consider electrical safety.** Use a power-board with a surge protector where you need to connect more than one appliance. Avoid overloading power-boards with too many appliances and never plug one power-board into another. Visit Western Power <http://www.westernpower.com.au/safety-safety-at-home.html> for more information on electrical safety at home.
- » **Have a plan.** Develop and practice an escape plan in case of a fire in your home. Make sure all members of your family know what to do in an emergency - including how to call 000.



## Do you have the right level of home insurance cover?

It's a good idea to review your building and contents insurance regularly to make sure you have the right level of cover to suit your needs.

Accidents can happen, even when you do everything you can to keep your home safe. Having the right level of insurance will give you peace of mind should you need to replace your contents or rebuild your home after an accidental fire.



Use our building and contents insurance calculators at [rac.com.au/calculators](https://rac.com.au/calculators) to estimate the value of your home and its contents.

## Find out more

To learn more about preventing fires at home, contact the Department of Fire & Emergency Services (DFES) on 9395 9300 or visit [dfes.wa.gov.au](https://dfes.wa.gov.au)

For information on electrical safety at home visit [westerpower.com.au](https://westerpower.com.au)

## What are you covered for with RAC?

RAC Building and Contents Insurance includes\*:

- » Fire cover (natural and accidental)
- » Flood, earthquake and storm cover
- » New for old cover on your home contents, regardless of age
- » Cover for your furniture, carpets, household goods, appliances and gardening tools
- » Cover for your clothing, jewellery and precious items
- » Cover for your tools of trade
- » Cover for your fences

[rac.com.au/insurance](https://rac.com.au/insurance)



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