



Fire safety advice for users of
health care products and equipment



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Health care equipment and products used in the home allow people to remain in familiar surroundings. Whilst these items can ease discomfort and improve health care outcomes, it is important to be aware that they may increase the spread and intensity of a fire. Always follow the manufacturer's guidelines and these simple fire safety tips:

DYNAMIC AIRFLOW PRESSURE-RELIEVING MATTRESSES/OVERLAYS



Used for the prevention and treatment of pressure sores and ulcers which are caused by extended periods of immobility. The mattress is filled with air by a pump which adjusts pressure according to the patient's needs. When punctured by any heat source such as a match, the escaping

airflow can cause a fire to spread rapidly. The emergency battery backup may continue to pump air which can cause the fire to burn for longer.

- Never smoke or allow anyone else to smoke near an airflow mattress.
- Keep ignition sources such as matches, candles, incense sticks or oil burners away from airflow mattresses.
- Never use an electric blanket on an airflow mattress.
- Keep fires and heaters away from airflow mattresses.
- Never charge electrical items or place anything hot such as hair straighteners or hairdryers on an airflow mattress.

INCONTINENCE PRODUCTS



These are often supplied in large quantities to people who have continence problems. They can be bulky and difficult to store, can catch fire and will add fuel to a developing fire.

- Never smoke or allow others to smoke close to stored incontinence products.
- Always store incontinence products away from heat sources such as heaters, candles, chargers or anywhere else that they are likely to be subject to heat or flame.

HOME OXYGEN THERAPY



Used by people with severe respiratory conditions, oxygen therapy provides air that contains more oxygen than normal. Specialist equipment (which can include cylinders and portable units) is used to pipe medical oxygen through either a nasal cannula or facemask to the user. Using

medical oxygen creates an oxygen rich environment. This greatly increases the opportunity for a fire to start and grow.

Smoking or the use of any naked flames such as candles, fires and cooking anywhere near oxygen is extremely dangerous and increases the risk of significant injury in the event of a fire.

- Never smoke or allow someone else to smoke nearby whilst using oxygen equipment. This includes e-cigarettes and their chargers.
- Do not use matches or any naked flame such as candles, incense sticks or oil burners in the same room as oxygen equipment.
- Keep well away from gas stoves, portable or open fires.
- Do not use flammable emollient products.
- Make sure oxygen is turned off when not in use.

EMOLLIENT CREAMS



Used to prevent or treat dry skin conditions in people spending extended periods in a bed or armchair due to illness or impaired

mobility. Products can be creams, lotions or gels that cover the skin with a protective film to reduce water loss. These products contain flammable ingredients such as paraffin or natural oils. Anyone using emollients regularly should keep well away from fire or naked flames. A build up of oily residue on bedding, clothing and dressings can increase flammability.

- Ask your GP or pharmacist about switching to emollient products which have little or no flammable content.
- Use natural fabrics such as cotton which can be washed at a high temperature with plenty of detergent to ensure as much oily residue is removed as possible.

FIRE SAFETY ADVICE



A fire can start in any room. Fit smoke alarms in hallways and landings and in any room where people smoke, use candles, incense sticks or portable heaters, or where electrical equipment such as satellite boxes, heaters, computers or mobile phones are switched on or left charging.

- Try to fit interlinked smoke alarms throughout your property so that they will all activate together and give the earliest possible warning in the event of fire.
- Fit a heat alarm in the kitchen (these react to rapid heat increase not smoke).

- If telecare services are provided, ensure the call centre is automatically alerted when any alarm or sensor is activated.
- It is safer not to smoke, but if you do smoke cigarettes or cigars use a deep ashtray placed on a stable surface away from any equipment in use.
- Vaping holds fewer fire risks than cigarettes but always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Do not use smoking products (including e-cigarettes) in bed or anywhere you may feel sleepy such as an armchair.
- Consider using flame retardant items such as bedding, nightwear and throws.
- Do not overload power sockets and always use fused power strips.
- Get advice from LFB about fitting sprinklers or portable protection systems.
- Fit a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm for protection against CO poisoning.

A person-centred risk assessment tool is also available on our website to assist people to identify fire risks in their home.

HOME FIRE SAFETY VISITS

We will provide advice on how to **prevent** fires, information on the importance of smoke alarms to **detect** a fire and discuss your **escape** plan in the event of a fire. Specialist alarms are available (strobe light and vibrating pads) for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Book a home fire safety visit:

- Freephone **0800 028 4428**
- Email **smokealarms@london-fire.gov.uk**
- Text/SMS **07860 021 319**