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Extreme weather

LFB
LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Prolonged hot dry weather or extreme heat can increase the risk of fire in homes, businesses and outdoors. It can also impact on our health, particularly with older and young people.

Make sure you are up-to-date on our latest advice and follow our top tips to keep you and those around you safe.

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BARBEQUE SAFETY

If you are having a picnic in a park or open space – don't use a BBQ (including disposables), grass can be very dry and a fire can start and spread quickly. This puts people, homes, property and wildlife in danger. You can help to reduce the risk of a fire by not using any naked flames in the open.

If you do BBQ at home – it is important to check you have taken the right safety precautions.

- Don't use a BBQ on a balcony. Flames, sparks and hot embers can cause a fire and spread quickly to other parts of the building.
- Position your BBQ on level ground (not decking) and keep it well away from anything that may catch fire such as sheds, fences or trees.
- Never light a barbecue in an enclosed space and don't use accelerants to get it going.
- Avoid distractions from people around you and never leave the BBQ unattended.
- Avoid drinking alcohol if you are in charge of the BBQ.
- Keep children, pets and garden games a safe distance from the BBQ.
- Have a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergency use.
- After cooking, let it cool and make sure it is properly out – smouldering ashes can give off dangerous carbon monoxide fumes and can be fatal.

BONFIRES/RUBBISH FIRES

Having a bonfire or burning rubbish in your garden or elsewhere can be extremely dangerous in dry conditions. They can quickly get out of control and spread to nearby property, fencing, vegetation, grass and overhanging trees.

Make sure your bonfire is well away from anything flammable and is kept to a manageable size.

COMBUSTIBLE WASTE AND MATERIALS

Keep all combustible materials away from buildings, especially any emergency escape routes.

If you have substantial amounts of pallets or industrial waste, then split up where it is stored to prevent the possibility of a larger fire should they ignite. Steps should also be taken to ensure skips and bins are emptied to prevent a fire from spreading.

Regularly remove combustible waste including accumulations of dust, leaves, sticks and cardboard, as these can ignite and increase the chances of fires spreading through a property and surrounding areas much quicker.

Flammable liquids and cylinders should be stored securely and kept away from ignition sources.

WILDFIRES

Lengthy periods of hot dry weather cause dry grass and foliage, and it only takes a spark to cause a wildfire. These are uncontrolled and unpredictable and can spread very quickly. Here's a reminder of our top tips:

- Don't throw cigarettes out of car windows, they may land on dry grass by the roadside.
- Don't have barbecues in parks and public or other open spaces.
- Take all your litter home – including glass bottles.

If you discover a wildfire:

- Ensure you are in a safe location (away from vegetation and smoke).
- Stay calm – call **999** immediately.
- If you are in your car, close all windows and vents.
- Be as specific as you can about the location, the size and any other relevant information. Apps like **what3words** can help fire crews to get there quickly.
- Do not attempt to tackle the blaze yourself.
- Stay well away from wildfires as fire can smolder or spread underground.

SMOKING

It is safer not to smoke but, if you choose to smoke outdoors, please be a considerate smoker:

- Take extra care to ensure that cigarettes are put right out and disposed of safely.
- Never throw cigarette butts from a balcony, they could start a fire elsewhere.
- Don't drop cigarettes onto dry ground or throw them from car windows.
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.

GLASS/OTHER CLEAR MATERIALS

Glass objects can act as a lens and can focus or reflect sunlight, setting alight to nearby flammable objects such as curtains and soft furnishings. Always keep mirrors, crystals, glass ornaments and other reflective items out of direct sunlight.

Outdoors

Glass bottles and other clear materials can start fires if left in direct sunlight.

Remember to take your rubbish home or use the public bins and recycle if possible.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Beating the heat during soaring temperatures can increase our risk of electrical fires – stay cool and follow this advice.

Power cuts

Increased electricity consumption combined with the high temperatures can lead to power outages.

In the event of a power cut, free call **105** – you will be put through to your local electricity network operator who can give you help and advice.

If you or someone you know is vulnerable or may need extra support during a power cut, register for priority services online:
www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/power-cut/priority-services/about-the-priority-services-register

Fans

If you use a fan, make sure it has been well maintained and follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe and ongoing use.

- It might be tempting, but avoid leaving your fan on when asleep – if a fault occurs, it could be fatal.
- Always place your fan on a flat stable surface and if you notice any smell of burning or unusual noises, turn it off immediately.
- If you use an extension lead, don't overload the sockets.
- Avoid trips and falls – keep your cables tidy.

Remember: Online marketplaces are not held to the same standards as high street shops and you could be at risk from substandard products that pose a risk of electric shock and fire. Always buy your electrical products from a reputable retailer.

LITHIUM BATTERIES

Lithium batteries safely power everyday devices such as mobile phones, laptops, e-bikes and e-cigarettes but it's important to ensure that the products you buy are genuine and meet UK safety standards.

- Follow the safety instructions that came with your device.
- Ensure your battery is cool before placing on charge and do not cover.
- Charge batteries in a cool, dry area and keep them out of direct sunlight.
- Unplug once fully charged.
- Always use the correct charger for your device.

It is dangerous to store or charge items like e-bikes, mobility and e-scooters on hallways, stairwells and landings (or your balcony). In the event of a fire they will block the escape route, preventing escape and delay firefighting.

Visit **london-fire.gov.uk/chargesafe** for more advice on lithium batteries.

Smoke alarms save lives

Fit them in rooms where you charge and test them regularly to make sure they are working properly.

FLASH FLOODING

Flash flooding can take you by surprise and be unpredictable. It happens when rain falls so quickly that dry parched ground can't drain away fast enough.

Call Floodline on **0345 988 1188** to report flooding in your area, or if your home is flooded.

Go to our website for advice:
london-fire.gov.uk/safety/flooding

- Make sure you know how to turn off your gas, water and electrical supplies in an emergency.
- Put an emergency grab bag together, include medication, important documents, clothes and toiletries.
- Use flood barriers if possible, to divert water away from your home.
- Flood water may contain high levels of raw sewage or other hazardous substances.
- Look out for vulnerable neighbours. Make sure they know what they need to do in an emergency.

WATER SAFETY AND DROWNING PREVENTION

We want you to enjoy the water safely, but drowning in the UK is one of the leading causes of accidental death. Whilst it may be warm, our waterways can still be very cold. Jumping into cold water can cause your body to go into shock, causing panic, disorientation, and loss of muscular control. This can cause you to gasp for air resulting in water being inhaled.

Float to live

- Take a minute. The initial effects of cold water pass in less than a minute – don't try to swim straight away.
- Relax and float on your back to catch your breath.
- Try to get hold of something that will help you float.
- Keep calm then call for help or swim to safety if you are able.

Look at the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), 'Float to live' video **https://rnli.org/safety/float**

THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK

It's never a good idea to go for a swim or jump into water (from any height) when you have been drinking.

Watch out for your friends if they have been drinking – stick together and try to avoid routes that take you near water.

Don't be tempted to take short cuts especially if they are close to the water's edge, especially in the dark. You could slip and fall in.

LFB supports #DontDrinkandDrown. Visit: **www.rlss.org.uk/pages/category/dont-drink-and-drown**

Visit our web pages for advice on summer water safety: **london-fire.gov.uk/safety/water-safety**

Staying healthy during a heatwave

Rising temperatures can impact us in many ways, taking its toll on our health, especially older people, young children and those with serious illnesses.

What can you do?

The Met Office tracks weather and issues a warning if a heatwave is predicted.

To help you cope in hot weather follow the advice from NHS England:

- Try to keep out of the sun between 11am to 3pm.
- Wear UV sunglasses, a wide-brimmed hat and loose-fitting cotton clothes.
- Walk in the shade and apply sunscreen with high UVA protection.
- Drink lots of cool drinks.
- Never leave anyone (or a pet) in a closed parked vehicle, especially older people, infants or young children.
- Children should not take part in vigorous physical activity on very hot days.
- Keep your bedroom and living space cool by closing the curtains on windows that face the sun and opening your windows at cooler times of the day.
- Turn off non-essential lights and electrical items as these generate heat.

For more information go: **www.gov.uk/government/publications/beat-the-heat-hot-weather-advice**

Travelling around London

During very high temperatures temporary speed restrictions may need to be introduced on parts of the Tube and Rail network as a safety precaution.

- Check before you travel for delays or cancellations.
- Carry extra water with you and use available water points to refill water bottles.
- If you feel unwell, get off at the next stop and speak to the bus driver or a member of staff.
- If you can – travel at quieter times.

ARSON

Arson (deliberate firesetting) is a criminal offence that can lead to loss of life and injury. It can damage property and have a negative effect on the environment.

Setting a fire in parks and open spaces such as grasslands, wooded areas, sports grounds and allotments not only kills wildlife, it can cause widespread damage. It also pollutes the air with harmful emissions such as the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide.

Business premises should take effective security measures to deter and prevent arson. Wheelie bins and paladins with lockable lids and wheels are recommended and should be stored securely. Consider fitting CCTV systems, alarms and security lighting.

If you see any suspicious activity report it by calling either: Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** or the police on **101**.

LFB offers free one-to-one fire safety education to children and young people who have demonstrated any type of firesetting or fire play and provides advice to parents and carers.

For more information:
Email: **firesetters@london-fire.gov.uk**

Visit our website:
london-fire.gov.uk/community/young-people/worried-about-someone-setting-fires/getting-help-how-to-refer/

HOW TO REPORT A SERIOUS FIRE RISK

We will investigate serious fire risks that could cause an immediate threat to life.

Common examples of serious fire risks are:

- Unsafe storage of combustible waste, chemicals or flammable materials.
- Locked or blocked fire exits in commercial or residential properties.

What we don't investigate

- Bonfires in gardens – these are the responsibility of the Environmental Health department of your local council.

If you're not sure about the risk, play it safe and make a report to us. If a different organisation needs to look into it we'll let you know.

How to make a report:

If possible call us on **020 8555 1200 x89170** – during office hours, this will get the quickest response.

Out-of-hours calls will go to our control centre. Or report online at: **london-fire.gov.uk/contact-us/**

We'll ask for your details, but we will not share your identity.