

WINTER WARMTH AND COST OF LIVING



For many years West Midlands Fire Service has supported the Winter Warmth Campaign and incorporated safety advice and signposting information as an integral part of the Safe and Well visits. These visits provide WMFS the opportunity to engage with those most at risk of fires and other emergencies within the communities we serve.

As winter approaches this year there are additional challenges being faced by the communities we serve. These relate to the energy price crisis and general cost of living including:

- rising interest rates
- increasing inflation rates
- increased price of fuel (petrol and diesel) and the wider effects of this on pricing
- rising food costs
- unprecedented, predicted bills for energy, gas, electricity etc
- mortgage and rent fees highly likely to increase dramatically.

These factors could lead to an increased risk of fire related incidents within homes. We all need to be more vigilant when conducting home visits and be aware of the risks to look for.

How can you help to reduce the risk?

When conducting home visits, officers may spot behavioural changes or increased fire risks within the household as people struggle with the "heat or eat" situation that many people are finding themselves in.

If you notice any changes in behaviour which may present a fire risk to the occupier, you should refer them for a Safe and Well Visit using this QR code:



If you already have an existing reference number relating to Winter Warmth you should continue to use that reference number, for example:

3886: DMBC Winter Warmth (Social Housing)

3887: DMBC Winter Warmth (Owner Occupied)

3888: DMBC Winter Warmth (Private Rented)

3973: Local Energy Advice Partnership

Candle Safety:

Possible behavioural changes may include the use of candles to provide lighting. We know that candles are used more in winter months with certain festivals and the cost of electricity may exacerbate this usage.

Risks could include use of candles near curtains or not securing them in an appropriate holder.

A safer alternative to real candles are battery operated lights which can be obtained from high street shops.

Further safety advice is available here: www.wmfs.net/safety/candle-safety/

Portable Heater Safety:

With gas, electricity and heating oil prices increasing people may look at alternative forms of heating. These could include the use of portable gas heaters, oil filled radiators and electric fan heaters to name a few. Fires can be caused if these are used or situated incorrectly, for example placed too close to combustible materials.

Further safety advice is available here: www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guidance/product-safety/portable-heaters/

Chimneys and Open Fire Safety:

There may be an increase in the use of open fires, where it is possible that chimneys have not been correctly maintained, indoor barbeques and the use of combustible materials in an unsafe way.

Further safety advice is available here:

www.wmfs.net/safety/chimneys-and-open-fires/

Heat The Human:

There are other ways people can keep warm whilst reducing the use of energy, these are highlighted in the Heat the Human campaign:

www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/heat-at-the-human-not-the-home-save-energy/

Kitchen Safety:

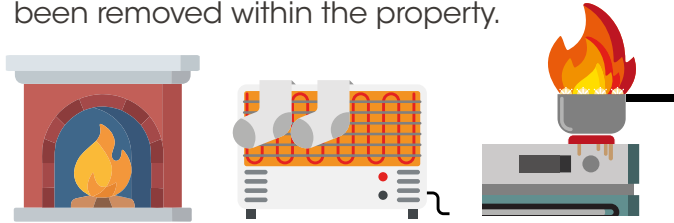
As food costs increase, households may revert to other methods of cooking, for example using a chip pan as opposed to using the oven to cook, potential use of barbeques indoors increasing the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Information on cooking and kitchen safety is available here:

www.wmfs.net/safety/kitchen-safety/

All the above identified risks could result in an increase in accidental dwelling fires, deaths and injuries. This risk is intensified by people choosing to work from home as opposed to travelling to their workplace due to the cost of fuel and public transport.

Risks of fire in any of the above circumstances will be heightened if the property is cluttered or hoarding is evident or if internal doors have been removed within the property.



New Legislation - The Laws in England are changing for Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

We know this Winter is going to be challenging for many in our communities and there are going to be difficult choices about heating and cooking as previously highlighted. As well as the increased risk of fire there is also the threat of increased levels of carbon monoxide in the home which can lead to individuals becoming seriously ill.

With effect from 1st October 2022 all landlords must ensure that:

- There is at least one smoke detector on each floor of their homes where there is a room used as living accommodation.

- A carbon monoxide alarm is fitted in any room used as living accommodation which contains a fixed combustion appliance, with the exception of gas cookers e.g. log burner or a gas fire.
- Smoke alarms and Carbon Monoxide alarms are repaired or replaced by the landlord once they are informed or find out that they are faulty.

The legislation that is changing is called **The Smoke and carbon Monoxide Alarm (amendment) Regulations 2022**. It sets out statutory duties for all landlords of all types of rented accommodation where there is living accommodation.

To make a referral for a Safe and Well Visit, please use this QR code:



Further information and guidance about the Cost-of-Living is available on our website: www.wmfs.net/safety/cost-of-living-stay-fire-safe/