

Hoarding and fire hazards in the home

2nd March 2017

Introduction SM Davis from Kensington Fire station

Ask mobiles on silent

Any questions during presentation please ask.

Home Fire Safety Visits

This is a free service carried out by the Fire Service to members of the public which provides the following:

Advice given on fire safety in the home in subjects such as prevention, detection and escape.

Fitting of smoke alarms if not already present in the property.



Important part of the fire service is Fire prevention/fire safety

Free service- provides fire safety advice and fitting of a free smoke alarm/specialist alarms

Important that if people have a smoke alarm they still require a HFSV-test of alarm check location and fire safety advice.

How many people have a smoke alarm?

How many people have tested their alarm in the last month?

Changed battery in the last year?

New smoke alarms now have less false alarms and have a battery life of 10 years.

Priority People

Any person that displays three or more the following criteria is a Priority Person to the London Fire Brigade:

- **Live alone.**
- **Have any disability (physical, or self declared mental health or learning disability issues).**
- **Live in social housing (social landlord or local authority).**
- **Any person over 60 years of age.**
- **A single parent (with a child under 15).**
- **A smoker.**



Borough target for HFSV 1872 per year

Help direct/prioritise the work we have a target 87% P1(1629)

Basically a priority person-

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- **A smoker.**

Data shows that people with these traits is most at risk from danger of fire.

Priority People

Any person referred by a partnership agency working in the following areas will automatically be classed as a Vulnerable person.

- Alcohol or drug treatment.
- Mental health.
- Social care.
- Daily domiciliary care provision

Permission must be sort from the individual in the four categories above for a referral to take place.



Additionally anyone referred from a partnership agency

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Important to note we do have ways to access individuals who do not want help, this may be as a GRV so that they do not feel they are singled out.

Identifying Hazards

- Smoking
- Cooking
- Candles
- Electrical safety
- Space heating
- Hoarding



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These are the most common hazards that can lead to a fire starting we will discuss in depth some of the triggers that you can be on the look out for, partner agencies that come into contact with vulnerable people can be the eye's and ears of the brigade and refer them for a HFSV.

Smoking

When identifying hazards associated with a person smoking in the home, the following could signify a person at risk:

Overfilled ashtrays

Cigarette burns to clothing

Cigarette burns to furniture or carpets

Discarded cigarettes around the home



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Over filled ashtrays are a obvious sign of a smoking hazard, this can be reduced by simply putting a system in place to empty ashtrays and to ensure that they are using a appropriate ash tray, there are self closing ash trays that are available.

Some people especially the elderly have a favourite/day chair that can be a indication of careless smoking, this is an example of [REDACTED] who was 85 and a heavy smoker.

Are we going to stop her smoking? Probably not but what we can do is reduce the risk, so for this resident she was supplied with additional smoke detection and provided with a fire retardant throw for the chair and also it was used as a rug to protect the carpet area around the chair, a self closing ash tray was also provided.



Another common smoking hazard is people smoking in bed, this is a picture of a [REDACTED] who was 70 and again she was a heavy smoker who smoked in bed, when crews asked her if she smoked in bed she was adamant that she did not, however this is a picture of her nightie with burns marks visible on the front, she also had burn marks on the bedding.

Are we going to stop her smoking? No but in this case we reduced the risk by additional smoke detection, fire retardant bedding and a fire retardant nightie.

Cooking hazards

The following points are situations that can lead to accidental kitchen fires:

Build up of grease and dirt on cooker.

Storage of items on or around cooker.

Pans over filled with cooking oil.

Distraction through alcohol and other activities



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This is a picture from a flat where crews completed a HFSV.

What can you see as hazards? Plastic bottle and plastic bread bag on top of cooker these can become heated and melt causing a fire. General house keeping is not great with lots of clutter around cooker that could cause a fire.

Some residents who have meal on wheels and do not use their cooking appliances but still have them use them as a storage area by placing a cover on the top, I have attended a number of fires where they have accidentally turned them on and this had ignited what ever is on the top of the cooker. A simple way to address the risk is to remove the cooking appliance or have it disconnected.



This is probably the most common cause of fires within kitchen appliances, a build of grease and oil over time, which when an oven is used for a long period, normally a Sunday roast will cause a fire within the appliance.

Candles

Candles are use in the home for a variety of reasons, from religious, social, domestic and pleasure. The following points should identify associated risks:

Not placed in appropriate holders.

Placed near over hanging items i.e. curtains.

Tea lights use without holders.



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A good example of a appropriate holder.

Does anyone use scented or tea light candles?

Has anyone tried to pick up the candle whilst it has been burning?

The foil holder itself gets really hot and if this is used a plastic surface it can actually melt the plastic and become unstable and fall causing a fire.



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I have also come across elderly residents who due to financial concerns do not want to use lights so will actually use candles instead, they do not use the appropriate holders and as the picture shows will use the candle on a tea plate or any other type of surface which will have obvious hazards.

Electrical Safety

The following points are situations that can lead to accidental fires or electric shock of an individual:

Overloading of sockets.

Damaged leads on electrical appliances.

Electrical wires trailing under or over carpets



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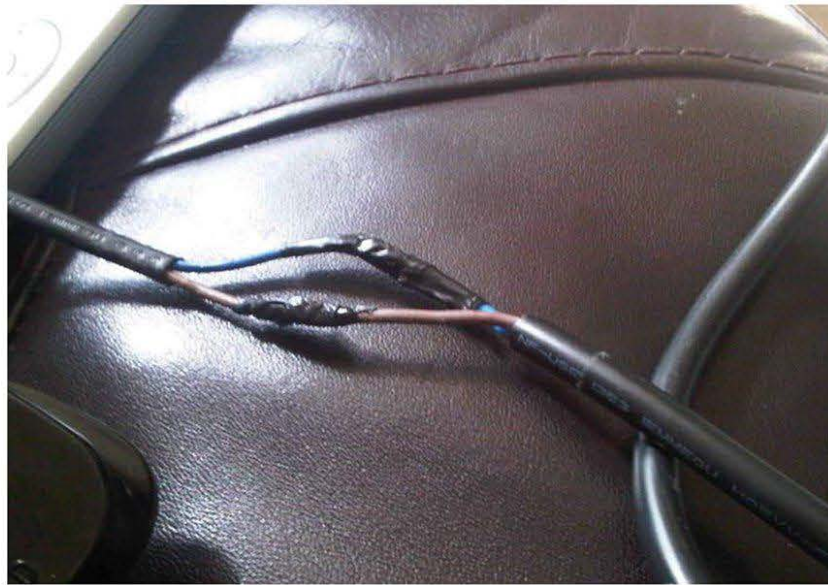
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2 examples of poor housekeeping in relation to sockets and overloading.

This first picture shows an old style adaptor which has a design fault in that the weight of the adaptor will pull it away from the socket and will cause arcing and lead to a fire, we recommend that people use the bar style of adaptor which is a lot safer.



Another cause is overloading of sockets so an example would be a kettle and a toaster using the same socket, this would exceed the current rating and could cause the socket to overheat and cause a fire.



This is an example of a poor repair to electrical cables, any repairs must be completed by a suitably qualified electrician.



I have attended a number of fires that have been caused when people hide cables under carpets, there is a number of hazards that can be associated when this happens, sometimes cables can become heated and this can cause the underlay to melt and lead to a fire developing, another can be when cables are hidden near to door ways and when people continually walk over the cables they can become worn over time and this will lead to the cable degrading and can lead to a fire developing.

Heating

Heating comes in various forms and the main risks are associated with portable heating for example; Bar fires, fan heaters, convertor heaters and Calor gas heaters.

The risks are as follows:

Items being placed over the heaters

Heaters being placed too close to objects in the home.

Open fires being without fire guards with signs of scorching on carpet and rugs.



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This is your old style electrical bar heater.

What do we think the main hazard associated with this type of heater?

When anything comes into direct contact with the bars they will become heated rapidly and will lead to a fire developing.



This is a convection style heater, what do we think is the main hazard with the picture?

The appliance itself is the hazard as it will not be able to operate correctly, if air can not circulate then it will over heat and could then lead to a fire developing.



Open fires are becoming more popular, I have attended a number of these where the resident has got financial worries and does not want to use their central heating so will use an open fire because they believe this is a cheaper way of keeping warm.

The important thing to remember that we must use a fire guard.



The reason we use a fire guard is to protect against hot embers being ejected from the fire onto a combustible surface like a carpet.

Log burning stoves are becoming more popular and it is important that these are fitted by a qualified contactor.

Hoarding

Hoarding in residential properties brings a unique set of issues with regards to fire safety for the residents and for the Fire service.

Due to the increased fire risk in the property and the limited room for escape for the resident this type of habit should be identified and immediately referred to partnership agencies.

i.e. Local Authority Environmental Health department, Housing Association and to the Fire Service.



Hoarding in residential properties brings a unique set of issues with regards to fire safety for the residents and for the Fire service.

Hoarding within a property will increase the fire loading, so basically there will be more to burn and this will impact on crews that attend the incident .

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The following are photo's of addresses that I have attended, this was a lounge, but was not obviously used as such.

I am sure most of us have come across someone that has hoarded at some point of our careers.

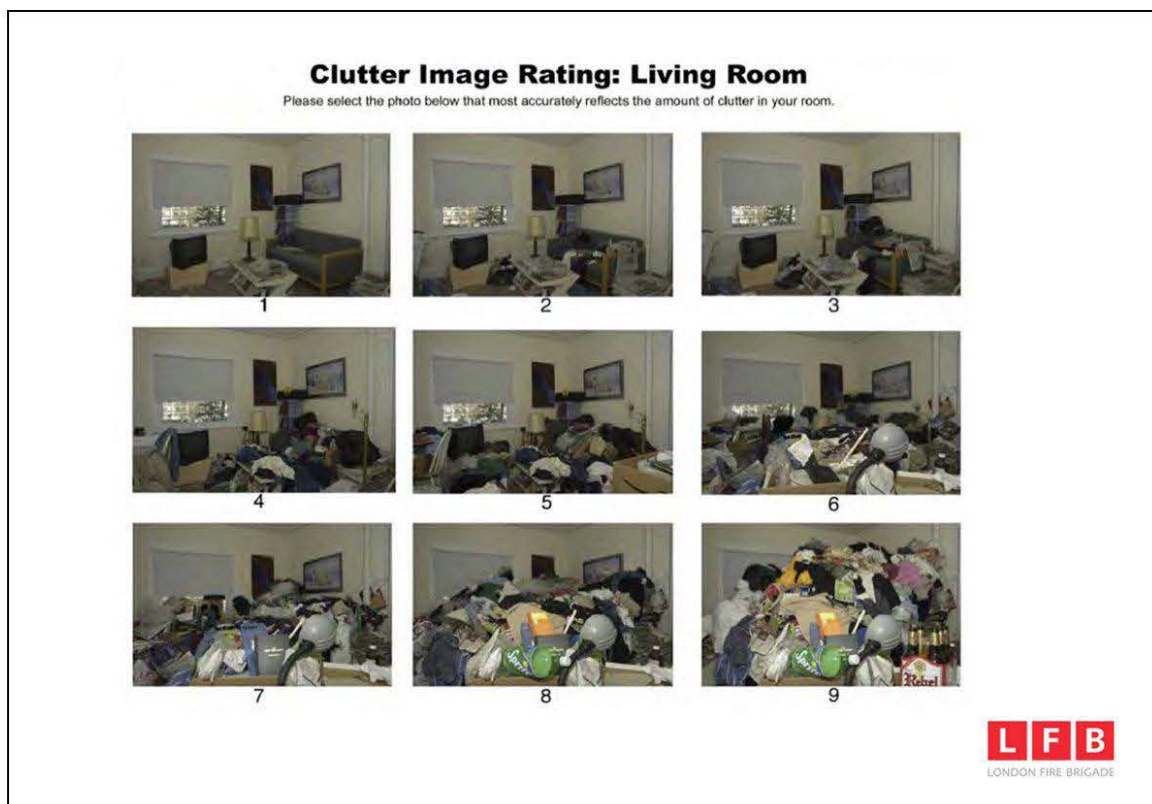


Some people are unaware that there is a hoarding concern, this gentleman informed me that he did not have a hoarding issue but that he had just had a party the night before.



This photo was from a prolific hoarder in Sutton, they have received help over the years but it had a number of challenges including being a private property and every time the property was cleared it slowly became cluttered again.

The lady as this photo showed had no access to her property through the front door, her only access was through a rear window.



Is everyone aware of the Clutter Image Rating?

The CIR is a rising pictorial scale of nine photos showing clutter in three rooms – living room, bedroom and kitchen. It is an internationally recognised assessment tool used by psychologists working with people who hoard and commonly used by the health and social care sector in the UK.

This helps crews agree levels when they encounter a hoarder a copy is kept on all front line appliances, levels 5-9 required urgent and detailed action by LFB.

Reporting process



This is a flow chart of how reporting process should work

Fire All Out

Any fire that has occurred in a property that has been extinguished by the resident or a third party must be reported to the London Fire Brigade.

This then enables the fire service to record evidence and collect data to identify and support vulnerable people.



Fire all out is a term used by the brigade but is something everyone should be aware.

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An example was when I attended a fatal fire and as part of the investigation it was identified through the social care company's log book that they had recorded that the individual had a fire the day before the fatal incident and had tidied it up.

No guarantee that if we had been called there would have been a different outcome but we would have had the opportunity to engage with the individual.

