



**Fire safety advice** for users of  
health care products and equipment



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Use of health care products and equipment can allow people to remain cared for in their homes. Whilst these items can ease discomfort and improve quality of life, it is important to keep in mind these simple fire safety tips.

## DYNAMIC AIRFLOW PRESSURE-RELIEVING MATTRESSES/OVERLAYS



These are used to prevent and treat pressure sores and ulcers, which are caused by long 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 (eg a match or cigarette), the escaping air can cause a fire to spread rapidly.

If a light, the emergency back-up battery may also 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, cigarettes, 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 safely away from anything that has a flame or is likely to get hot, for example heaters, candles, fires, chargers and other electrical appliances.

### Remember

Health care equipment may increase the spread and intensity of a fire.

## EMOLLIENT AND SKIN CREAMS



Emollients and skin creams are used to prevent or treat dry skin conditions and for 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.

A build up of emollient/skin cream residue on bedding, clothing and dressings can increase their flammability and also make a fire burn more intensely.

Unfortunately regularly washing fabrics does not completely remove the oily residue or the fire risk. Therefore, anyone using emollients and skin creams regularly, should keep their clothing, bedding and dressings well away from naked flames and heat sources (including cigarettes).

## 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 the medical oxygen through either a nasal cannula or facemask to the user.

Using medical oxygen creates an oxygen rich environment. More oxygen in the air will increase the opportunity for a fire to start and grow more quickly.

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 let anyone else smoke nearby whilst using oxygen equipment. This includes e-cigarettes and their chargers.
- Do not use matches or any naked flames (such as candles, incense sticks or oil burners, gas stoves, portable or open fires) where oxygen equipment is used.
- Make sure oxygen is turned off when not in use.
- If emollients/skin creams are used, discuss these risks with your prescriber.

## FIRE SAFETY ADVICE



A fire can start in any room. Fit smoke alarms in your lounge/living room, bedrooms, landings and hallways. Keep smoke alarms away from kitchens or bathrooms as steam can set them off.

- Fit a heat alarm in the kitchen (these react to rapid heat increase not smoke).
- 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.
- If telecare services are provided/used, ensure the call centre is automatically

alerted when any alarm or sensor is activated in the home.

- 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. Always use a fused 'inline' extension lead.
- Get advice from LFB about fitting sprinklers or portable protection systems.
- Fit a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm for protection against CO poisoning.

A checklist for person-centred fire risk is also available to download on our website to help people to identify 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 free home fire safety visit:

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