

WEST RAND DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY: DEPARTMENT PUBLIC SAFETY: Fire Safety Tips

Now that winter is at our doorstep people will use all sorts of measures to warm themselves, like using open flames to generate heat. Most fires are caused by carelessness, lack of thought and/or lack of concentration.

Heating and paraffin appliances can be very dangerous if not used correctly. Candles, matches and lighters can also be dangerous if special care is not taken. Children need to be educated on the dangers of fire and told not to play with any item that can create an open flame.

Rules of household heating during winter:

Never use an electric oven to heat the house.

Keep children and pets at least one meter away from all heating units.

Never leave a heater unattended - this includes while you are sleeping.

Open fireplaces should always have a spark guard.

Always extinguish the fire in a fireplace before you go to bed.

When using gas heaters and fireplaces, ensure that the room is adequately ventilated.

Never leave a heater on when you leave the house.

Do not place objects directly on top of heaters and leave a one-meter object free space around heating units.

Always check cords and wiring on electrical heaters before using them and don't use devices with frayed or damaged wiring.

Don't use extension cords or multi-plugs for your heaters.

Fire safety tips during load shedding

When it comes to load-shedding, the fire risk is mainly due to appliances, such as irons, hair dryers, cookers and heaters inadvertently being left on.

Home fire-safety checks

- Check for and replace any faulty electrical outlets and old or outdated appliances.
- Ensure any worn-out sockets are replaced as these are often not earthed properly.
- Test the earth leakage on the distribution board.
- Ensure any electrical multiplug extensions are not overloaded.
- Invest in a small fire extinguisher for the home and make sure everyone knows where it is located and how to use it.

Tips for load-shedding

- Ensure appliances such as irons, hairdryers, cookers and heaters are not inadvertently left on.
- Leave one light on to indicate the return of power.
- Fit all electrical or electronic appliances with surge plugs to prevent nuisance tripping or power surges.
- If candles or paraffin lamps are used as a light source, place these in proper holders so that they do not fall over, and remember to extinguish them once the power is back.

Here are some safety hints and tips to keep in mind to prevent shack fires:

- Never cook near materials that can ignite
- Make sure that all stoves are on a stable surface to prevent them from falling over
- Make sure all candles are placed in a safe, non-combustible candle holder
- Be aware of the dangers of illegal and faulty electrical connections. Any electrical connection must be installed by an accredited electrician
- Discard cigarettes in a safe container and ensure that they are extinguished
- Keep a bucket with water handy to extinguish small fires
- Keep a bucket filled with sand handy to extinguish paraffin fires
- Keep a close eye on paraffin stoves. Never use water to extinguish paraffin stove fires
- Build dwellings a good distance apart (at least 3 m) to prevent fires from spreading rapidly. Open spaces must be kept clean and clear
- Keep roads and access to dwellings clear at all times if emergency vehicles have to respond
- Do not block roads with possessions when there is a fire
- Do not prevent or disrupt emergency personnel when they attend to incidents
- All open fires must be extinguished before you leave the area or go to sleep
- Ensure that there is enough ventilation when cooking food on open flames inside your dwelling
- Take special care when using gas appliances to cook food; the cylinders must be in a good condition and tested regularly for any leaks that might cause a fire and/or an explosion
- Never leave a brazier or coal fire burning inside the house overnight as it is a health hazard
- Never lock your door from the inside using a padlock; use a shooter instead for easy unlocking should a fire occur

All emergency numbers must be communicated to communities to report fire and rescue incidents to the correct services once an emergency occurs.

Emergency Numbers:

107 (Telkom)

011 951 3000 (Cell phones)