In just the last 12 months, 111 people in Scotland DIED because of fire and another 2,300 people suffered non-fatal injuries.

- 85 people were KILLED in 76 house fires
  - misuse of alcohol was a major contributory factor in 41 of the 76 fatal fires
  - carelessly throwing away cigarettes, matches and lighters caused 39 of the 76 fatal fires
  - over 55% of the 53 men and 32 women who died were living alone
  - over 57% were aged over 60
  - 24 people were aged 30 - 60
  - 12 people who died were under 30
  - separate house fires caused multiple deaths. In one fire, 4 people were killed. In 5 other house fires, 2 people were killed each time
  - smoke alarms were fitted in 44 of the 76 homes were people died
  - only 6 alarms were known to have operated properly
  - in the other 38 cases, 15 did not have a battery fitted and 3 had flat batteries

FIRE INVESTIGATORS SAY THAT 39 OF THE 85 HOUSE FIRE DEATHS WERE POTENTIALLY AVOIDABLE IF SMOKE ALARMS HAD BEEN FITTED AND IN WORKING ORDER

- 34 fatal fires started in the living-room, 21 in the bedroom and 13 in the kitchen
- polyurethane foam filled furniture contributed to 14 fatal fires

FIRE SAFETY SCOTLAND

**Tragedy as 111 die, 2,300 injured**

The shocking facts

- Highland and Islands Fire Brigade has the highest percentage of chimney fires in the UK (69%)
- Dumfries and Galloway has 54%. Greater London has 1%
- Tayside has the highest number of rescues per million population in the UK - 283. Lowest is Surrey (20)
- Scotland has some of the highest non-fatal casualty rates in the UK.
  - Lothian and Borders has 417 per million population. Tayside has 373 and Strathclyde has 356. Highest is Greater Manchester (565) and lowest is Bedfordshire (76)
- In the UK, 3,100 people were killed or injured in malicious fires. Of the 53 deaths, 17% were suicide and 25% were people setting fire to their own property or someone else’s property
- 26 people died in fires outdoors, including 6 people killed when a Cessna light plane crashed near Glasgow Airport.
  - There were no deaths caused by fires in commercial or industrial buildings

Lives that could have been saved

Tomorrow may be too late

Make a fire plan TODAY

Fire safety education

Have a Merry Safer Christmas

Danger living room - spot the hazards

Fat - the fuel of fires

Sprinklers join the fight against fires

Safety lessons save family home

Fire safety at work

Hoaxers - zero tolerance

Golden rules in rural areas

Win a safety CD
Firefighters are taking a full role in partnerships promoting safer communities - not just ‘putting out fires’, says Firemaster Colin Cranston.

Firemaster Cranston, chairman of the Scottish branch of the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association, says: “Firefighters have far more to offer the community and in the next few years, I believe we will see an even greater change in our role.

“Partnerships with other agencies are already showing benefits. We are all working together to protect the whole community.”

But Scotland’s tragic fire record means that there is a lot of work to do in educating people and helping them to prevent fires in their homes.

- People living in Scotland are twice as likely to be killed in a fire than those living south of the border
- 92% of Scots homes have smoke alarms
- But 10% of those are reckoned to be OUT OF ORDER

Firemaster Cranston, of Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade says: “We have been successful in getting people to buy and fit smoke alarms for their homes, and they are now installed by law in new build and renovated houses.

“But we have to persuade people to maintain their alarms, to make sure the battery is working - and NOT to remove the battery to use in some other piece of equipment.

“I think that as a society we do not have the same high level of awareness - or even the level of fear - as people in continental Europe, who get far fewer fires than we do. We do not pay the same attention to safety issues. Other countries seem to be much more aware than we are.

“Fire safety is one of a range of safety issues and it is a team job to get safety messages across to people. It is very encouraging that now all the agencies involved are working together in a way that was unheard of just a few years ago. That partnership can only grow to strengthen the community as a whole.

“We need to take a long term view. Education programmes are important - if we can get safety messages across to young children, they will grow up to bring up their own families in a safer environment.

“Children are also great for carrying the message about safety home to their parents and grandparents. They will nag their parents to get smoke alarms and maintain them, and to have a fire action plan. They will get the message across to the people they love the most. But it will take time to get safety messages across the generations.”

Firemaster Cranston says: “The consequences of fire can be horrendous, and not just those fires that cause deaths. Even the smallest house fire will cause a terrible mess – your furniture will be ruined, your treasured possessions will be lost, your clothes will be smoke-damaged. It does not have to be a big fire to ruin your home.

“Firefighters do not want to go to fires, we want to prevent them. Every time we go to a fire, it is a failure of our fire prevention programme. The fewer fires we have in Scotland, the more successful firefighters will have been.”

Scotland’s Chief Inspector of Fire Services says he is “disheartened” by the number of deaths that could have been saved by a working smoke alarm

Mr Dennis Davis says: “Many of these lives could undoubtedly have been saved by fitting a smoke alarm and keeping it in working order.

“Smoke alarms cost little and are easy to fit and maintain.”

Mr Davis says fire services in Scotland have a very high level of commitment to local communities:

“Brigades are continuing to seek improvements in the quality of service they provide.

“This service has expanded still further in the area of prevention and mitigation of fire, especially in the home, with many innovative fire safety education programmes.”

Fire services across Scotland are working to develop community fire safety strategies.

The Scottish Community Fire Safety Strategy Group also includes the Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland and the Fire Branch of the Scottish executive Justice Department.
Don't let it happen to you

Every year, there are 55,000 house fires in the UK that KILL 700 people and INJURE another 10,000. **Don't let it happen to YOU.**

Take a few minutes to think about fire safety in YOUR home. Take action NOW to make your home safe. **Tomorrow may be too late.**

**Electrical appliances**
- CHECK if they are designed to be left on - like videos
- If they're not, UNPLUG them when not in use
- NEVER leave them on overnight
- NEVER remove a plug by pulling the flex
- DON'T overload electrical sockets – remember one plug, one socket
- CHECK the fuse is the right size for the appliance
- LEARN wiring colours and check plugs are properly wired
- BUY equipment that carries the BEAB mark of safety

**Smoking**
- NEVER leave a cigarette or a pipe burning
- DON'T smoke in bed or in a chair if you think you might doze off
- EMPTY ashtrays before going to bed - and make sure the contents are completely extinguished

**Chip pans**
- NEVER fill a pan more than one-third full of fat or oil
- NEVER leave a pan unattended
- If the pan catches fire, do not move it and NEVER THROW WATER ON IT
- Turn off the heat if it is SAFE to do so
- COVER the pan with a damp cloth or tea towel and leave to cool for at least 30 minutes

**Open fires**
- ALWAYS put a fireguard round an open fire
- NEVER put clothes on the fireguard or dry clothes close to unguarded fires

**Wiring**
LOOK OUT for warning signs of dangerous wiring
- Hot plugs and sockets
- Fuses that blow for no obvious reason
- Lights flickering
- Brown scorch marks on sockets and plugs

**Cookers**
- TURN handles of saucepans inwards
- NEVER turn handles over a hot ring or burner
- KEEP saucepans out of reach of children
- Keep FLEXES from kettles and other electrical equipment away from the cooker
- Don't DRY tea towels over the cooker
- NEVER leave a saucepan unattended - especially a chip pan
- TURN off rings, burners and ovens after use

**Children**
- NEVER leave children alone with:
  - Matches
  - Portable heaters
  - Open fires
  - Cookers
- NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN ALONE IN THE HOUSE

**Electric blankets**
- FOLLOW the manufacturer’s instructions
- If the blanket is not designed to stay on, SWITCH off your blanket when you get into bed
- TIE underblankets to the mattress
- KEEP blankets dry and flat
- Have you blanket SERVICED once a year
- ONLY buy blankets that carry a British Standard kitemark

**Heaters**
- DON'T sit too close to heaters
- STAND heaters in a safe place where they can't be knocked over
- KEEP them away from furniture, curtains and cushions
- DON'T put heaters where objects could fall on them
- NEVER put portable heaters close to a bed
- NEVER use portable heaters to dry clothes
- PUT guards round all heaters

**Bedtime routine**

Many fires start at night. A bedtime fire safety routine will help keep your home and family safe from fire.

Follow these simple steps and sleep safely every night:
- unplug all electrical appliances not designed to stay on
- make sure no cigarettes are still burning
- empty ashtrays - making sure contents are cold
- put a guard around open fires
- switch off portable heaters
- close all doors

**10 key points**

1. Plan your escape route now
2. Practise your escape route as a family
3. You only have seconds - don't stop for valuables
4. Shout to alert your family
5. Keep low if the house is full of smoke. Air is clearer and cooler nearer the floor
6. Don't investigate - keep doors closed
7. If there's no way out, get everyone into a safe room
8. Never jump straight out of a window. Lower yourself on to cushions etc
9. If necessary break the glass and make all jagged edges safe
10. When you're out - STAY OUT - dial 999
Driving the message home

Firefighters in Aberdeen are working with the city's care workers to bring better fire safety to thousands of the most vulnerable homes.

Care workers visiting clients make a fire safety check of the house and give advice to the people living there.

Where there is a major problem, they ask the client to let a fire officer come to give them advice on fire safety.

Divisional Officer John Ryan, Grampian Fire Brigade's Head of Community Fire Safety Education, says: “Through this partnership we are reaching thousands of families with fire safety messages and spotting potential fire hazards before a tragedy occurs.

“If the care worker finds a very serious hazard we will respond with a visit to the house within 24 hours.”

Dangerous practices noted include:

• missing doors
• drying clothes around a fire
• no smoke alarm
• unguarded fires

Care workers have a check card to assess the level of risk in the house. Their checklist includes:

• overloaded sockets
• pans left unattended in the kitchen
• towels hanging over the cooker
• trailing electrical flexes
• overfilled chip pans
• fires without guards
• does the occupier smoke in bed?

Mr Ryan says: “The scheme has been so successful that we are now in talks with Moray and Aberdeenshire Councils to extend the project.”

Make a fire plan TODAY

Fire can develop and spread through a house very quickly. It's essential to plan NOW for the action you and your family should take if fire broke out in your house.

• THINK about how you would get out of the house safely
• PLAN how to get out if your normal exit is cut off by fire or smoke
• TEST whether the smoke alarm can be heard in every room of the house with all doors closed
• DISCUSS your fire plan with all members of the family and make sure everyone understands what to do
• PRACTISE your fire plan
• CLOSE all doors at night

What to do if your smoke alarm goes off

When your escape route CAN be used:

• Alert everyone in the house and get them OUT as quickly as possible
• DON'T look for the fire but, if possible, close the door of the room where the fire is
• When you're outside, get to a telephone and CALL 999 and ask for the fire brigade
• DON’T GO BACK INTO THE HOUSE
• ALERT your neighbours

When your escape route CANNOT be used:

• Alert everyone and if possible GATHER everyone together in one room (if possible one with a telephone)
• CLOSE the door and pack towels, cushions or clothing around it to keep smoke out
• DON’T open the door of a room if it feels warm to touch with the back of your hand
• Go to a window and SHOUT to attract attention and get help
• STAY at the open window
• If you are on the first floor, you may be able to LOWER yourself from the window sill to arm's length before dropping to the ground. Drop pillows or cushions first to break your fall. NEVER JUMP from the window.
• If there are two adults, one should go first to catch children. Pass them down slowly, stretching to full length before letting go.
• If you are trapped in a higher storey, lean out of the open window for fresh air until firefighters arrive

The shocking facts

You have more chance of a fire in your home than at work. And a house fire is more likely to result in death or injury.
Teaching fire safety is a full-time job

Teaching fire safety to primary pupils is a full-time job in Lothian and Borders. The brigade was one of the first in the UK to have a fully qualified primary teacher helping to deliver their wide-ranging fire safety education programme.

A massive, mobile classroom visits classes in 50 specially selected ‘hot spot’ areas with the highest incidence of fire – and the most need for fire safety education.

Primary 6 pupils have an intensive two day fire safety education led by the teacher and a uniformed fire officer.

Brigade Education Officer Margaret Young says: “Teaching school pupils is an ideal way of getting fire safety messages into the home. Children of this age are just right for encouraging them to nag their parents to fit smoke alarms and work out a household fire plan.

“We give each child an ‘ID card’ which makes them an official Fire Safety Officer for their family and they are great at making the family think about fire risks and action plans.”

School visits are followed up a month later with a visit from local firefighters who bring a fire appliance to refresh the lessons learned by the children.

Pupils are also treated to a visit to Lothian and Borders’ Fire Museum and given a certificate to show they have completed the fire safety course.

A second tier education project, using a smaller demonstration trailer, is staffed by uniformed officers who deliver shorter courses.

Lothian and Borders’ firefighters are on target to visit all 307 primary schools in the brigade area.

Divisional Officer Graham Torrie, of the Brigade’s Community Safety Group says: “We are proud of our education service, because we believe that it’s the key to long term fire safety to protect lives in the future.”

For baby - a smoke alarm

New babies in Fife receive bootees and babygrows from proud grandparents - and a smoke alarm from well-meaning firefighters.

Fife Fire and Rescue Service works in partnership with local maternity services to get in touch with all new mums. And if baby’s home is not already fitted with a smoke alarm, firefighters arrange with health visitors to deliver one.

Divisional Officer Alan Sheach says: “Parents know their responsibilities to their children, but sometimes fire safety gets overlooked with all the excitement of a new baby.”

Pester power on safety

More than 5,000 school pupils in the Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannan areas benefited from fire safety education last year.

Central Scotland Fire Brigade's dedicated education team teach pupils in Primary 1 and 2 with modules that fit the 5-14 curriculum, teaching new words, role playing and learning about safety.

The specialist team also focuses on P6 pupils and is developing its curriculum for secondary students.

Station Officer John Neville says: “We get good results from talking to P6 pupils. They’re just the right age to get the messages across to their parents through pester power.”
Have a Merry Safer Christmas

Recipe for success

- if you're leaving a turkey to cook overnight, make sure you're familiar with the timer controls on your cooker and the temperature is set correctly
- if you're setting light to the Christmas pudding, don't pour the alcohol straight from the bottle. Put a small amount in a non-combustible container, like an eggcup, and pour it onto the pudding from there
- DON'T add more alcohol. If you add alcohol to a flame, you could get a 'flashback'. If you spill just a drop and the tablecloth catches fire, it can be put out with water.

Make fire safety your New Year resolution

Research shows that the most popular resolutions every New Year are giving up smoking, losing weight and getting fitted.

Divisional Officer Graham Torrie, of Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade, says: "There are some resolutions that are not so hard to achieve that will benefit individuals and families alike.

"Spend a small amount of time thinking about safety in your home. Like the other more popular resolutions, it's a lifetime's investment.

"Every year, too many people die and many more are injured in their homes because they haven't given fire safety a moment's thought."

Online for fire lessons

Scotland has its own online fire safety teaching programme for schools.

The project was started in Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade and the web site was developed by the Scottish Fire Service and funded by the Scottish Executive.

It is a high quality, flexible educational package, especially for schools in remote and rural areas that do not get visits from fire service mobile classrooms.

Modules on the site show:
- how to identify and eliminate fire hazards
- what to do if fire breaks out
- how to minimise its impact

The modules also provide online support for teachers. Access the Scottish Fire Service education website at www.firesafety.org.uk

The shocking facts

- Fire investigators say that 39 fire deaths in Scotland last year might have been avoided if smoke alarms had been fitted and in working order
- Christmas is traditionally spent at home with family and friends. And with all the festive fun, it's easy to forget what a DANGEROUS place home can be.

Forget the saying 'Safe as Houses'.

A staggering TWO AND A HALF MILLION people go to hospital each year in the UK after an accident in the home. And well over 1,000,000 of these involve an in-patient stay.

Around 3,800 people are KILLED in home accidents each year. And it's children and older people - the very people who are brought together at Christmas - who are most at risk.

Homes can be LETHAL, especially with the combination of alcohol, cooking, and new toys strewn around the house.

The good news is that the vast majority of home accidents are totally preventable - and a little preparation can make all the difference.

Decorations

Before Christmas celebrations even begin, think about decorations and where to hang streamers and paper chains. They should always be well away from heat sources and where they cannot fall onto a heater or open fire.

Take simple precautions to minimise the risk of fire:
- make sure balloons or paper chains are not hanging near a light fitting
- don't stand cards on the mantelpiece or anywhere near a heater or fire
- make sure fairy lights are to a British Standard and carry a Kitemark

- inspect the lights carefully to make sure there are no cracked bulbs
- check that wires have not been pulled away from the bulb holders
- ALWAYS turn off and unplug the lights before changing a bulb or making any checks
- Christmas tree lights heat up so keep them away from anything that will burn
- NEVER use indoor Christmas tree lights outside
- NEVER light candles on a Christmas tree
- replace your lights if they are showing signs of wear

Drink

Alcohol-related accidents are not just confined to the road. It's almost impossible to quantify how many home accidents are indirectly or directly caused by alcohol misuse.

Firefighters are well aware of the connection between alcohol and fires.
- it's natural to enjoy a drink at Christmas. But it doesn't make sense to overindulge especially before the cooking is well out of the way
- alcohol affects co-ordination and reaction time. That makes falls more likely, particularly for older people

Kitchen

Your kitchen is one of the main DANGER AREAS in your home at Christmas.

Over 250,000 people need medical attention for injuries in the kitchen every year. And it's not surprising, women are almost TWICE as vulnerable as men.

When you're cooking the Christmas dinner
- protect children from the risk of burn and scald injuries by making sure they are kept well away from the kitchen and food preparation area
- involve as few people as possible in the preparations and be extra careful lifting the heavy turkey from the oven

Safer

Make your home a safer place, at Christmas and all year.

It's really about IDENTIFYING potential hazards and making small modifications to reduce accident risk.

Look carefully at your house and identify accidents waiting to happen.

If lots of children are likely to be visiting, ask yourself what dangers they could face from burns and scalds and toxic chemicals

Be extra vigilant at Christmas. You want your visitors to feel at home, but they might not know their way around the house and that can lead to greater accident risk.

Nearly all home accidents are preventable. And prevention is better than spending Boxing day in Casualty.

All it takes is a bit of thought. Have a very Merry Christmas!
All dressed up for Christmas
- and deadly dangerous

Can you spot the hazards in our Christmas living room? Each is potentially deadly.

• Christmas tree could be knocked over by chair
• Candles left lit on mantelpiece
• Loose decorations could catch fire
• Presents too near fire
• Cigarette burning on ashtray on chair arm
• Lightbulb in lamp too high wattage
• No guard on fire
• Toy could fall on to fire or child reaching for toy could come into contact with fire
• Aerosol could fall on to fire
• Mirror above fireplace could encourage someone to come too close to fire – thin nightwear is especially vulnerable
• Plant on tv – dangerous to have water near electrical equipment
• Too many plugs on socket
• Wire running under carpet
• Loose rug, could cause a fall

Graphic by David White, audio visual department, Lothian & Borders Fire Brigade
Dying for a drink

Alcohol is connected to almost all deaths and injuries in fires, say firefighters.

"Even a small amount of alcohol affects people's awareness and alertness," says Station Officer Stewart Nelson of Tayside Fire Brigade.

"Alcohol makes you fall asleep and you may sleep more deeply than normal. People might be smoking and fall asleep, and drop their cigarette while it's still lit.

"Or they come home from the pub or club and put the chip pan on. It's not unusual for people to put on a chip pan at 3am.

"Then they go to watch the television while it heats up and fall asleep on the sofa. They may wake up to find the pan on fire or sadly, they may not wake up at all.

"When people have been drinking, their senses are not so sharp and they can get careless. "People think it can't happen to them - unfortunately it does."

Fat - fuel for fires

Making chips could be the death of you, firefighters warn.

Cooking - and especially deep fat frying is the most common cause of fire:

- 16,000 fires every year in the UK
- 400 deaths
- 3000 people injured

But with just a few simple steps most of these fires could be AVOIDED.

The best advice is to throw away your old chip pan and buy a thermostat controlled electric deep fat fryer that will cut out if the fat overheats.

If you MUST use a traditional deep fat fryer:

- NEVER fill it more than one third full
- NEVER leave it unattended - even for a few seconds
- MAKE SURE the handle is out of reach of children
- NEVER cook with oil or fat if you have been drinking alcohol

If your oil or fat pan catches fire:

- DO NOT move it
- IF IT IS SAFE, turn off the heat and put a damp tea towel over the pan to smother the flames
- NEVER THROW WATER ON THE FIRE
- LEAVE the pan to cool down for 30 minutes
- If the fire is out of control LEAVE THE ROOM
- Close the door and DIAL 999 for the Fire Brigade

Lighting up a fire

Smokers are 75% more likely to have a fire in the house than a non-smoker.

Careless disposal of cigarettes, matches and lighters:

- are a major cause of death and injury in the home
- account for one-third of fire deaths in the home
- are responsible for one in five injuries from fire in the home
- cause one in 10 fires in the home

Over the limit

Around 63% of men and 48% of women who died in house fires in the UK had blood-alcohol levels above the legal drink-drive limit (80 milligrams per 100mg of blood)

The shocking facts

- 60% of fires start in the kitchen
- 14% in the living room
- 7% in the bedroom
Sprinklers join the fight against fire

Sprinklers systems specially designed for homes will save lives and reduce injuries, say fire chiefs.

Strathclyde Fire Brigade is now officially recommending that people install domestic sprinklers in their homes.

A sprinkler system and a smoke detector make a "formidable combination" in the fight against fire.

Divisional Officer David Smith says: "Smoke detectors are a major factor in reducing fire deaths. But a smoke detector can only give an early warning of a fire - it won't stop a fire happening, or developing."

"The combination of a sprinkler system and smoke detector will reduce fire deaths and horrific injuries, limit fire damage and the huge cost that involves."

Many of the people who die in fires have been unable to escape from their home because they are too young, too old, too infirm or are affected by the consumption of too much alcohol.

Smoke detectors will raise the alarm, but only sprinklers will attack the fire and save vulnerable people.

Strathclyde Fire Brigade is campaigning for legislation for sprinklers in new homes. It also supports fitting sprinklers in homes that are being refurbished.

"Residential fire sprinklers will save lives."

Sprinklers - the facts

- there has never been a fire death in the UK in a building with a sprinkler system
- research in the US estimates that fitting sprinklers could mean 73% fewer deaths
- domestic sprinklers raise the alarm, control the fire and may put it out
- installation of sprinklers costs about £2,000
- sprinkler heads and pipework can be concealed from view
- sprinklers dramatically reduce the number of fire deaths and injuries
- damage to property is minimised
- hazards faced by firefighters - such as flashover and backdraught - is reduced
- local authority costs and insurance costs will be substantially down

Smoke alarms save lives

That's a fact.
- not having one could cost you your life, or the lives of your family,
- 500 people die and thousands more are injured in fires every year
- fire develops rapidly and spreads fast - within minutes your home could be engulfed in flame
- a smoke alarm gives you precious life saving minutes to get yourself and your family to safety

Buying a smoke alarm
Make sure it has the British Standard mark number BS 5446
Choose between two types:
- Ionisation - not expensive but cooking or portable gas heaters can cause false alarms
- Optical - more expensive but less likely to cause false alarms

Is your life worth £2?

That's the price of a battery for your smoke alarm. It can save your life.

One in four smoke alarms fails to work because the battery is flat - or because there's NO BATTERY in it.

Change the battery once a year. Pick an easy to remember date - your own birthday or January 1 - so you don't forget. NEW YEAR - NEW BATTERY.

At the same time, clean the smoke alarm casings. Just lightly vacuum the inside and outside. Your smoke alarm needs to be checked once a week.

Pick a day and make it a weekly routine. MONDAY - TEST DAY.

Reducing the risk

Sprinkler systems are pipes filled with water with specially designed fast response sprinkler heads around the house.

The sprinkler heads are activated by fire. They deliver a controlled water spray directly on to the fire, to raise the alarm, control the fire and reduce the risk of death or injury.

A recent conference on domestic sprinklers held by Strathclyde Brigade heard that the advantages of sprinklers include:
- speed of operation - activate within seconds
- only the heads nearest the fire will operate
- few moving parts - maintenance once a year
- accidental operation of sprinklers is a 1 in 16 million chance

Protecting property - and people

Sprinklers in the home are now recognised as life savers.

Station Officer John Neville, of Central Fire Brigade, says: "The value of sprinklers in the home is now widely recognised."

"Some years ago, they were installed in buildings as a measure to protect property. Now we know that when they are installed in home they save lives, too."

Central Fire Brigade hosted an international conference in November to demonstrate a new type of sprinklers that draws water from mains supplies, making for easier maintenance.
Helping carers

Special training for carers is helping older people and people with disabilities.

Dumfries and Galloway Fire Brigade is giving advice to about 1000 carers in the region.

Sub Officer Ivan Kennedy says: “We alert them to spot hazards, such as clients who smoke in bed or are careless with smoking materials. And because many carers look after clients 24 hours a day, we show them how to make an effective fire plan.”

The Brigade’s current training programme for carers follows the success of the scheme three years ago which worked with home helps.

Community fire safety officers are also visiting the six area activity and resource centres in the region, giving specialist training to people with disabilities who live on their own in the community.

The talks include visual aids for people who suffer from dyslexia, or have other learning difficulties.

Safety lessons save family home

Schoolgirl Catriona Maton's ambition to be a firefighter saved her family's house - and their summer holiday in Greece.

Catriona (12) of Kirkcaldy, Fife, learned fire safety at her primary school two years ago and kept up her interest in firefighting. She had nagged her mum to replace the battery in the smoke detector in their front hall only SIX WEEKS before fire broke out in the house.

In July, Catriona's parents and sister were out of the house, and she went to the cinema with their neighbours. When they got back, Catriona saw smoke coming from her house. She ran to the front door and heard the alarm sounding.

Catriona remembered from her fire safety lessons never to go into a building on fire. She went to the back of the house and saw the fire in the kitchen.

Her neighbours phoned Fife Fire and Rescue Service and firefighters found that the fire had been confined to the grill pan of the cooker that had been accidentally left on. There was only slight smoke damage in the kitchen and hallway.

Fife Firemaster Nigel Campion presented Catriona with a Certificate of Commendation for her actions, and Catriona and her mum were guests of honour at a special firefighting exercise at Kirkcaldy Fire Station.

Station Officer Iain Kelly said: “It was because Catriona remembered her fire safety training and nagged her mum to put a battery in the smoke alarm that she was alerted to the danger when she got back home. And she remembered never to go into a building on fire - that could have endangered her life.

*Catriona and her family were leaving for a holiday in Greece the next day - her actions in limiting damage to the house saved the holiday for all the family!*
Fire services will give advice to employers on the fire precautions they must have in place in the workplace.

And employers can get help online to carry out their own risk assessment at Workplace Regulations One Stop Shop - www.fire.org.uk

It gives advice on how to avoid fires in the workplace and how to ensure people’s safety if a fire does start.

All employers must complete a risk assessment:

- fire kills. UK fire brigades attend around 36,000 fires a year in workplaces. These fires kill around 30 people and injure over 2600
- fire costs money. The costs of a serious fire can be high and afterwards many businesses do not reopen

The advice in the guide applies to most workplaces. Extra guidance is available for certain industries, like workplaces where very large quantities of flammable or explosive materials are handled.

Divisional Officer Mick McKay of Tayside Fire Brigade says: "Anyone who has employees MUST carry out a risk assessment and have it approved by their local fire service."

Although the guide is written for employers, it is also useful to self-employed people, employee-elected representatives, trade union-appointed health and safety representatives, and all other people who have a role in fire safety in the workplace.

Fire safety tips
for small business and offices

Fire is the biggest threat to any business. And small businesses, especially when they’re operating from single premises, are particularly vulnerable. That’s because they might not be able to cope as well as a bigger company with the after effects of fire.

The Fire Protection Association say:

- make sure that office machinery and workshop equipment is switched off when it's not in use, especially last thing at night
- make sure that all doors and windows are securely locked at the end of each day’s work
- make sure there are no piles of waste materials left close to the outside of buildings which could be set on fire

Why do fires start?

Fires at work have three main causes:

- they are started deliberately
- people are not alert to fire hazards
- people are careless of fire hazards

A useful guide Fire Safety - an employers guide is available from The Stationery Office (ISBN 0 11 341229 0) price £9.95
Children as young as eight are putting lives at risk by making hoax 999 calls. But they are being tracked down and caught in a new ‘zero tolerance’ initiative in Fife. And Fife Fire and Rescue Service has achieved a 100% success rate in every one of the investigations they have mounted.

Assistant Divisional Officer Alan Sheach says: “The message to hoaxers - children or adults - is that we will come after you and we will catch you.

“It’s shocking, but the majority of hoax calls are made by children aged between eight and 11. And they often make a number of calls - one child we caught was responsible for 15 false turnouts.

“We have to hammer home the message that these calls put lives at risk.”

Investigating malicious calls is made easier by new technology. All 999 calls are recorded and sophisticated new technology is helping to identify the phone that callers are using.

*If the call has been made from a public box and the recording is of children’s voices - and 85% of them are - nearby schools are contacted and teachers are asked to help identify them.*

Children are interviewed by police and may be reported to a Children’s Panel or to the adult courts, depending on their age.

“We follow up with a visit to the school to talk to all pupils about the dangers of making hoax calls,” says Alan Sheach.

Mobile phone users have no escape either - calls can be traced to the service provider to find out whose phone is being used.

BT Scotland is working closely with firefighters and Alistair Cormie, of BT Scotland’s Nuisance Call Bureau (NCB) says: “One of the real successes in Fife has been their proactive stance on calls from payphones that can be identified by statistics collated by the NCB.

“We can identify ‘hot spots’ that can be followed up. It’s due to their real determination that a number of cases involving children and adults are now going through the legal process.”

Assistant Divisional Officer Alan Sheach, Fife Fire and Rescue Service

BT Scotland is working closely with firefighters and Alistair Cormie, of BT Scotland’s Nuisance Call Bureau, says: “The calls may have been made by children, without the householder knowing about it. The letters sent are tailored for each 999 call and are a way of making sure that line renters are aware of their responsibility.”

If the misuse of the service is serious, the renter of the service will receive a letter that states:

“Paragraph 10.6 of BT’s Telephone Service Conditions states that nobody must use the service: (a) to make offensive, indecent, menacing, nuisance or hoax calls (b) fraudulently or in connection with a criminal offence.

I have to advise you that if further calls of this type are made from your telephone line, additional action may be considered, including suspension of your telephone service.”

The letters are backed up by educational initiatives, particularly targeted at young people.

This is to ensure that children are made aware of how to use the 999 service properly and was boosted last year by a four-week campaign launched by Deputy First Minister Jim Wallace, supported by McDonald’s and Wiseman Dairies.

Tray inserts at the burger chain and milk cartons carried messages that ‘hoax calls cost lives’ and ‘use it don’t abuse it’.

Alistair Cormie said: “Everyone involved in the project agrees that education is the lynch pin, especially with young people.”

Now that people have a choice of telephone provider, BT has led the way in a forum, ‘Working Together’ that brings together the emergency services, other licensed telecom operators, OFTEL and the Home Office to reduce hoax and inappropriate 999 and nuisance calls.
Deadly serious

Hoax calls are not harmless fun, they are deadly serious, warns Scotland's Justice Minister Jim Wallace.

"Hoax calls to the emergency services are a serious problem. They are a waste of valuable resources and threaten the ability of the emergency services to respond quickly to people in genuine need of assistance.

"Malicious hoax calls are irresponsible and put lives in danger. People who may be tempted to indulge in such anti-social behaviour are committing an offence and they may also be endangering the lives of others, including firefighters responding to the calls and, perhaps, even their own friends and family."

Mr Wallace says many hoax calls are made by younger children. "They may see it simply as harmless fun, without giving any thought to the possible consequences. But hoax calls are not harmless fun, they are deadly serious."

People living in remote areas have even more need to heed fire safety, say firefighters in the Highlands and islands.

It can take hours for a fire appliance to reach a cottage in a remote glen or an island croft.

The recent fire which destroyed Sir Cameron Mackintosh's holiday home near Mallaig drove home the point.

Prevention and early detection of fire are essential in remote communities, says Sub-Officer Andrew Clark of Highland and Islands Fire Brigade.

The brigade area covers 12,000 square miles - the size of Belgium - and has just one full-time fire station, at Inverness, and 34 retained stations.

"In some cases we need the coastguard to assist us in reaching island fires.

"People who live in remote places are well advised to have a full fire prevention, detection and action plan. The golden rules are PREVENT, DETECT and ESCAPE."

"The most important thing is to save life and the best chance they have of doing that is to have followed fire safety advice, fitted a smoke detector and have a fire plan to follow in the event of a fire."

Cluttering up a common stair or entranceway could see you on the ‘Stairway to Heaven’ a new campaign warns.

A spate of fires in common stairs and entrances in Fife and Edinburgh led to the launch of the poster campaign, which vividly shows a burnt out stairwell leading to a bright 'heavenly' light.

Divisional Officer Graham Torrie, of Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade says: "We are asking people not to put out rubbish or store items on common stairs.

"If people put out a sofa or old mattress it's an invitation to vandals to set fire to it. The common stair is the means of escape for all the families who live on the stair and a fire will trap many, many people in their homes.

"Rubbish and other material left on stairs also obstructs the exit in case of a fire in another area."

The shocking facts

- There are 22 million 999 calls per year. And a shocking 11 million are HOAXES or inappropriate calls to the emergency services.
Primary schools throughout Strathclyde are to be given a new interactive CD to promote safety messages to children.

Strathclyde Fire Brigade, in partnership with Strathclyde Police and the Community Safety Centre, have produced ‘The Safety CD for Kids’, covering fire safety, drugs safety awareness and general safety.

The fire safety section is in four parts - Fire Wise, Fire Tutor, Fire Quiz and Squirt, an interactive fire safety game. Cartoons and quizzes give vital advice in a fun and absorbing way.

Strathclyde Firemaster Jeff Ord says: “The CD is an example of a project developed in line with the Brigade's Community Safety strategy. Our strategy aims to reduce the number of fires and consequently the number of fire deaths and injuries.

“We know that an effective route to raising the fire safety awareness of all family members is through children and our fire safety initiatives will continue to involve young people.”

A copy of our CD rom can be yours for only £3.00 including postage and packing by contacting:-

Strathclyde Fire Brigade
Community Fire Safety
Department
Bothwell Road
Hamilton
ML3 OEA

Win a funtastic firesafe CD

We’ve got 20 fun-filled interactive safety CDs for kids to give away (they’re fun for grown-ups, too). To win a CD just answer the following questions correctly:

1. What should you do to stop fire spreading from room to room?
   a) Shut down heating
   b) Close all doors
   c) Close all windows

2. Which of these three should be used to extinguish a chip pan fire?
   a) A fire blanket
   b) A heavy towel
   c) A water extinguisher

2. Before moving a portable heater, what should you do?
   a) Switch the heater off
   b) Wear gloves
   c) Clear a path for it

Send your answers along with your name and address to:

Safety CD for Kids competition
Community Fire Safety
Department
Strathclyde Fire Brigade
Headquarters
Bothwell Road
Hamilton
ML3 OEA

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