

Fire possibly caused by electric blanket

A fire in a three storey blocks of flats in Edinburgh, which led to three people being taken to hospital, may have been caused by an electric blanket fire chiefs said this week.

Six people, including two children, were rescued from the building at Craighouse Park in the Morningside area of the city after the alarm was raised at 7.40pm on Monday evening.

Group Manager Mike Partington from Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service said:

“The fire started in the bedroom of the ground floor flat, occupied by an elderly couple in their 80s. Initial investigations suggest that the cause may have been an electric blanket that had been put on earlier in the evening.

“By the time the couple, a man aged 84 and a woman aged 81, realised there was a fire, the bedroom was well alight and the flat was filling up with thick black smoke.

“They managed to make their way through heavy smoke filling the hallway and out to a neighbour. Both suffered severe smoke inhalation.

“A man who lived on the top floor of the building jumped to safety and was found in the rear garden by firefighters who administered first aid until he was taken to hospital.

“Another female occupant of the building suffered smoke inhalation and firefighters used a ladder to climb to the back window of a family of four. Because the couple had young children aged four and two a decision was taken to send the firefighter through the window into their home. Oxygen was given to the family and fire crews stayed with them giving reassurance and advice until the danger had passed.

“Early investigations suggest an electric blanket may have been the cause of the blaze.

“Every winter we see these types of electrical fires as electric blankets come back in to use for the cold weather.

“If they have been stored incorrectly, as in folded, the wires can be damaged and the risk of malfunction is increased.

“I would urge people with elderly relatives who may use electric blankets check the condition before use. If in doubt, a qualified electrician can make the appropriate safety checks.

“It’s not clear in this case if there was a working smoke alarm in the property but again make sure you and any elderly relatives or friends have a smoking alarm. Test it every week.

“The extra warning given really can save lives. Firefighters in your area can fit a smoke alarm for free as part of a home safety visit. To find out more call 0800 169 0320.”

Six firefighters wearing breathing apparatus extinguished the fire. The bedroom of the flat where the blaze started was completely gutted and the rest of the property was heavily smoke and fire damaged.