

New Year message from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Hard-hitting advertising campaign begins today.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has issued a New Year's call to action as it continues working to protect communities across the country.

Starting today and continuing until 4 January, people throughout Scotland will hear first-hand accounts of fire tragedies caused by the lethal combination of alcohol and smoking.



Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Lewis Ramsay, the SFRS Director of Prevention and Protection, said: "I want everyone to be aware that choosing to smoke while under the influence of alcohol is a potentially fatal decision.

"In the past year, almost half of the house fires where someone lost their life were started by smoking materials – and impairment due to alcohol or drugs is a suspected factor in 10 fire deaths and almost 280 injuries.

"Tragedies like these can be prevented if we are aware of the risks and take action to ensure ourselves and those around us do not become victims of fire.

"As we welcome 2014, I am urging everyone to join Scotland's fight against fire and help prevent the devastating loss of life and injuries that follow tragic, but preventable house fires.

"Smoking materials must be fully extinguished after use and

anyone who is under the influence of alcohol should avoid using them while in a chair or in bed, where they could fall asleep and become a fire casualty.”

If you do smoke it’s even more vital that you make sure you have working smoke alarms in your home. They should be fitted in the living room and in the hall.

Homes with more than one level should have smoke alarms fitted on each landing, so people have early warning wherever a fire breaks out.

SFRS recommend that you never smoke in bed but if you do, consider fitting a smoke alarm in the bedroom. Smoking a cigarette will not set off your smoke or heat alarms but a fire will.

The hard-hitting message is the latest put front and centre by the Join Scotland’s Fight Against Fire campaign.

In an advert airing on television and radio, a serving firefighter recalls attending a blaze where a man died after combining smoking with a New Year’s Day drink.

Watch Manager Barry Colvan recalls: “A local middle-aged gentleman decided to have a couple of night caps with a smoke before going to his bed.

“He knocked the cigarette onto a t-shirt next to his bed and it just slowly smouldered. It caught onto the bedding and then onto the individual himself.”

The message finishes with the SFRS officer’s powerful plea: “If you decide to have a night cap and one last cigarette, make sure it’s not going to be your last sleep.”

Members of the public have a key role to play in protecting communities from fire, with the partnership between SFRS and active citizens who look out for vulnerable residents identified as being key to saving lives.

Firefighters conducting free home fire safety visits will install long life battery smoke alarms wherever they are needed – and it's completely free of charge.

SFRS is eager for the public to help it deliver this potentially life-saving service to everyone in the community.

ACO Ramsay explained: "This year, pre-campaign research has revealed that just over 70 per cent of people would refer someone they knew to be at risk for a home fire safety visit or other service and we need members of the public to help us reach those most at risk.

"In the past year our crews conducted more than 56,000 free home fire safety visits, where they could give residents tips to prevent fire starting and to buy vital time if it does strike.

"It is a hugely popular and beneficial programme that gives vulnerable members of our community friendly support and some very welcome reassurance.

"If you keep an eye on a vulnerable relative, friend or neighbour then put them in contact with us – it could save their life."

Anyone can arrange a free home fire safety visit by calling the SFRS Freephone number 0800 0731 999 or by contacting their local fire station.

During December the message from SFRS was about the lethal combination of drinking alcohol and cooking:-