

Firefighters urge public to stay safe this winter



The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is appealing to the public to stay safe this winter by taking the necessary steps to protect their families, homes, customers and communities.

Winter weather results in an increase in activity for the SFRS due to road traffic collisions on icy roads, flooding and fire. Winter weather also means people spend more time at home. Combined with increased use of heating and electrical appliances plus higher alcohol consumption during the festive season, there are more house fires in December and January than at any other time of year.

A major risk factor is the combination of alcohol and cooking. Most house fires start in the kitchen and when people have been drinking their guard goes down, meaning it's very easy for them to become distracted.

Cooking remains the number one cause of house fires. It's easy to be distracted when cooking, and people who are under the influence of alcohol are even more likely to leave cooking unattended. Smoking, often combined with alcohol, is the main cause of fatal fires.

Assistant Chief Officer Lewis Ramsay, Director of Prevention and Protection for SFRS, said:

“Every year across Scotland, SFRS sees a peak in emergency calls due to winter weather. We urge the public to take action now and be prepared for whatever hazards might come in the next few months.

“This winter SFRS will work closely with local communities and partner agencies to keep Scotland safe from fire and other

emergencies – but as always, we need the public's help to reduce the amount of preventable fires we might see in the coming months.

“During a cold winter we use central heating and gas fires more often so the time to fit and test Carbon Monoxide alarms is now. It's also important to ensure that any chimneys or flues have been swept and are in a good, clean, working order.

It is vital that your home has working smoke alarms, enough so that everyone in your home will be alerted in the event of fire. You should also consider fitting a heat alarm in your kitchen. Please also think about friends, relatives and neighbours. Particularly older people. Do you know someone who has no working smoke alarm in their home?

“Winter weather also brings unexpected and dangerous conditions to our roads. It's important to ensure that your vehicle is serviced, well maintained and that drivers take the necessary precautions when driving in bad weather.” Further information about staying safe on the roads is available from www.roadsafetyscotland.org.uk.”

SFRS are also reminding the public that it's particularly important to look after the people in our communities who are vulnerable to the hazards winter weather brings, such as older people.

Around 1000 people are injured in fires every year in Scotland and every hour of every day there's a house fire in this country. 75% of preventable fire deaths in Scotland involve people aged 50 years or over and since 2009, 107 people over 60 have died in fires in Scotland.

ACO Lewis Ramsay, added: “It's about making everyone aware of what they can do to prevent a fire happening in their home. Our firefighters would much rather be visiting people's homes and providing this service than turning up when a fire has occurred and dealing with the trauma that causes.

“Do you know an older person and are worried about their safety this winter? It could be a friend, a relative or a neighbour. Why not knock their door, look in on them and make sure they get the support that’s available?”

“We can all work together to help keep our communities safe this winter.”

SFRS would like you to have a very happy, safe Christmas and New Year. If you or someone you know is vulnerable or may be at risk from fire please get in touch and arrange a FREE home fire safety visit with local firefighters by calling 0800 0731 999 or visit www.firescotland.gov.uk

A wide range of tips on how to keep yourself and your home safe from fire are available on the SFRS website: www.firescotland.gov.uk/winter