



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Protecting Our Community

COMMUNITY INFORMATION BULLETIN NO. 24

FIRE AND ALCOHOL CAN BE A LETHAL COCKTAIL

Every year Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service attends a large number of fires where the main factor is people under the influence of alcohol who have fallen asleep whilst smoking or cooking. Unfortunately, on a number of occasions, this has resulted in someone being seriously injured or losing their life.

Alcohol significantly affects human behaviour, so it is not surprising to find that it is a major factor in fire related deaths and injuries. If you are under the influence of alcohol, you are more likely to be careless when smoking or cooking. Alcohol reduces your ability to properly detect fire and therefore renders smoke detection devices virtually useless. You cannot escape from a fire if you cannot sense or heed a warning alarm, and this greatly reduces your chances of survival.

The following safety tips might just save your life:

- If you have been drinking, never smoke in bed; often clothes or bedding are the first items ignited which leaves the person in a particularly vulnerable position.
- Get into the habit of smoking outside; this will significantly reduce the likelihood of a fire starting in your home.
- The risk of accidents in the kitchen increases if you have been drinking; get take-away food instead.
- Don't take risks with portable heaters; make sure there is sufficient distance between the portable heater and any combustible material.
- Many fire deaths, where alcohol is a contributing factor, involve people who live alone; if you have family or friends like this, pay them a visit and make sure their home is safe from fire.
- Alcohol may affect your judgement: don't take risks tackling a fire; Get Out, Stay Out and Get the Fire Service Out.
- Don't forget, a working smoke alarm can buy you valuable time to escape if a fire starts. Every home should have at least one smoke alarm per floor; check it every week to ensure it is working.
- Take extra care if you have consumed any alcohol, and remember to carry out a bedtime routine.

Help and Support is Available

Realising you have a problem with alcohol is the first big step to getting help. Speak to your GP. Try to be accurate and honest about how much you drink and any problems it may be causing you. They will suggest different types of assessment and support options available to you. NIFRS has a partnership agreement with INSPIRE Wellbeing who can offer advice and provide information on free local support groups and other alcohol counselling services.

Useful Contacts

- Public Health Agency <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/alcohol-awareness-week-%E2%80%93-do-you-know-your-units>
- NIdirect <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/taxonomy/term/708>
- Drugs and Alcohol NI <https://drugsandalcoholni.info/>
- Inspire Wellbeing <https://www.inspire.com/>
- Samaritans www.samaritans.org Freephone Helpline number 116 123

For further information phone NIFRS HQ 028 9266 4221 or visit www.nifrs.org



#STOPfire