



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Protecting Our Community

COMMUNITY INFORMATION BULLETIN NO. 21

HOARDING AND FIRE SAFETY

Hoarding is a condition where a person has a persistent difficulty discarding personal possessions. The large amount of possessions fills the home and prevents normal use of space. Living space becomes cluttered and may be unusable.

Hoarding can increase the risk of a fire occurring and makes it more difficult for people living within the property to evacuate safely. Fire can also spread to neighbouring properties if the level of hoarding is severe or if flammable items such as gas containers are being stored. It also poses a high risk to firefighters and other first responders if attending the property.

If you do store large amounts of possessions in and around the home, you can help keep yourself safe by following this advice:

- Make it a priority to keep the area around the cooker clear.
- Do not place combustible items close to heaters, lamps or other electrical equipment.
- If you smoke, use a proper ashtray and place it on a flat, stable surface; empty the ashtray regularly and never leave cigarettes unattended.
- If you use candles or tea lights, ensure they are in a heat resistant holder on a flat, stable surface; never burn a candle on or near anything that can catch fire; keep burning candles away from furniture, curtains, bedding, carpets, books and paper, etc.
- Do not store gas cylinders in your home as they are a serious hazard during a fire.
- Do not stack items to a height that they become unstable.
- Ensure all internal doors can be closed, particularly before going to bed at night.
- Make sure you have a working smoke alarm and test it regularly.
- Plan and practise how to escape from your home if there is a fire.
- In the event of a fire, do not attempt to put it out yourself - leave your home immediately and call the Fire & Rescue Service once you are safely outside. Never go back inside once you have escaped.

If you think that a family member or someone you know may need some help or assistance with hoarding, try and persuade them to speak with their GP or contact their local Health Trust.

If there are any fire risk concerns regarding hoarding, contact Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) to arrange a free 'Home Fire Safety Check'. The visit will give firefighters a chance to offer fire safety advice for your home and make sure you know what to do if there is a fire and how to escape safely.

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



#STOPfire