



Australasian Fire and Emergency
Service Authorities Council

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Basic Home Fire Safety

Supporting units of competency from the
CHC08 Community Services Training Package

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council is deeply indebted to the officers and firefighters of member agencies who assisted in the development of this publication.

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General Information

This workbook includes the following information covered in the AFAC learning resource *Essential Knowledge: Basic Home Fire Safety*:

- Summary
- Self-check questions
- Activities
- Self-check answers.

Training Information

Target audience

The target audience for this training is:

- existing community sector workers - where basic home fire safety knowledge is new
- people wishing to enter the community sector - where basic home fire safety knowledge is new
- new community sector workers - as part of induction training
- existing community sector workers - as part of refresher training and skills maintenance.

Duration

The nominal duration for this training is **two hours**.

Learning objectives

At the completion of this training, participants should be able to demonstrate knowledge about:

- fire speed and spread
- role of fire services
- high risk groups in terms of basic home fire safety
- information that will assist clients to prevent a fire in their home
- information that will help clients to reduce or limit the severity of a fire in their home
- behavioural risk factors that may contribute to fire injury and/or fatality in a fire in the home
- behaviour that will reduce the risk of fire in the home
- role of a working smoke alarm
- different types of smoke alarms
- cleaning and testing required for smoke alarms
- placement of smoke alarms on basic house plans
- when to refer clients for smoke alarm installation or maintenance.

Assessment Information

Assessment

Assessment is only relevant where participants are undertaking this training as part of units of competency from the CHC08 Community Services Training Package, for which they want to be assessed.

Knowledge of basic home fire safety is part of this assessment process because 'the individual being assessed must provide evidence of specified essential knowledge as well as skills' (CHC08 Community Services Training Package).

Evidence of competence

Participants who are assessed as competent by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) can use this assessment as evidence against the Essential Knowledge and/or Essential skills in the units of competency listed in the AFAC learning resource *Essential Knowledge: Basic Home Fire Safety*.

Briefing of applicant

Applicants must be briefed on the general content and format of the assessment prior to being assessed. If the assessment is integrated into the training, this briefing should normally be given during the introduction. In other cases, the briefing should provide reasonable time for applicants to prepare themselves for the assessment.

Skills recognition

It is the responsibility of the participant to initiate an application for skills recognition. Participants who believe they can substantiate relevant current competence in basic home fire safety can apply for skills recognition. With skills recognition, the participant would undertake assessment without undertaking the training, as their application for skills recognition is saying that they do not require the training.

Re-assessment

Any participant deemed 'not yet competent' will be re-assessed in accordance with workplace policy and procedures.

Appeals and grievances

An appeal against an assessment outcome or process may be lodged at any time if the participant undergoing assessment feels that they have been disadvantaged or discriminated against. All appeals and grievances must be conducted in accordance with documented workplace policy and procedures.

Section 1 Fire

Summary

- Fire spreads very quickly.
- The impact of a fire can be minimised by preventing the spread of the fire.
- To prevent fires, eliminate heat sources or keep them away from combustible fuels.
- Sources of heat include open flames and sparks, smoking materials, electrical equipment, hot surfaces and other heat sources.
- The role of fire services is to reduce the loss of life and property due to fires and other emergency incidents.
- If people practise basic home fire safety and know what to do if there is a fire they will reduce the possibility of a fire occurring in the home.

Self-check questions

1. How long do fire services estimate that it takes from the start of a house fire to full involvement of the fire in the room of origin?
2. Fire services aim to ...?
3. How is fire spread from one point to another?

Activities

Outline four sources of heat in three client's homes (clients with different support needs) and how these could be eliminated.

Identify four sources of heat in your own home, potential risks and how these could be eliminated.

Section 2 Home fire safety: High risk groups

Summary

- Fatal fires are more likely to occur at night when people are asleep.
- In a fire, people are more likely to die as a result of smoke inhalation than burns.
- Not having a smoke alarm can increase the likelihood of a fire fatality in the home by 60%.
- Certain groups of people are more at risk of being involved in preventable residential fire fatalities than other groups of people.
- Groups of people at a high risk of being involved in a preventable residential fire fatality include:
 - people aged 65 years and over
 - children aged between 0-4 years
 - adults affected by alcohol consumption.
- Fire injuries are more likely to start in the kitchen and to occur when people are cooking their evening meal.
- Leaving equipment unattended is more likely to cause a fire injury.
- In fire injuries, one of the major reasons for the ineffectiveness of smoke alarms is that the battery or smoke alarm has been disconnected.

Self-check questions

1. When are fatal fires in the home more likely to occur?
2. When are fire injuries in the home more likely to occur?
3. Who are the high fire risk groups for fatal fires in the home?
4. Who are the high fire risk groups for fire injuries in the home?
5. What are some of the most common causes of fire in preventable residential fire fatalities?
6. What are some of the types of heat ignition in preventable residential fire injuries?

Activities

Identify clients who would fit with the specific high fire risk groups (for fire fatalities and fire injuries) and why.

Outline how you could assist these clients, within your agency's policies, to reduce their fire risk.

Give three reasons why people from the following groups can be a high fire risk:

- people aged 65 years and over
- children aged between 0-4 years
- adults affected by alcohol consumption.

Section 3 Behaviour in the home that may contribute to fire injury and/or fatality

Summary

- Community sector workers can encourage clients to behave safely by passing on basic home fire safety information.
- Community sector workers should respond to home fire safety within their role and agency protocols.
- Older people, children, people experiencing social and financial disadvantage, people affected by alcohol and other drugs (including medication), and smokers are more at risk of being involved in a fire in the home.
- There are a range of things that people can do to reduce the risk of fire in the home, which can include simple prevention related to the use of appliances and equipment, candles and oil burners, cooking, electrical repairs, heating, hoarding, security, smoke alarms, smoking, storage of chemicals.
- A home fire escape/evacuation plan is an essential part of home fire safety.
- If there is a fire in the home: get out, stay out and call Triple Zero (000).

Self-check questions

1. What are some of the fire risk factors associated with older people?
2. What are some of the fire risk factors associated with children under 5 years of age?
3. What are some of the fire risk factors associated with people affected by alcohol and other drugs (including medication)?
4. What are some of the fire risk factors associated with people who experience social and financial disadvantage?
5. What fire safety prevention information could you give to clients who use candles, oil burners or incense?
6. What are the fire risks associated with household hoarding?
7. Deadlocked doors are a fire risk - what information would you give to clients to maintain their fire safety and security in the home?
8. The fire risk for smokers is particularly significant - how would you assist clients who smoke at home, to do so safely?

Activities

Develop a home fire escape/evacuation plan for your own home and discuss this with the other people with whom you live.

Identify who prepares the home fire escape/evacuation plan for clients in your agency and what your agency expects you to do in relation to this home fire escape/evacuation plan (if anything).

Identify how you would report an electrical fault or faulty appliance in a client's home.

Outline how your agency could assist high fire risk clients to achieve basic home fire safety.

Identify how you would assist someone affected by hoarding to reduce their fire risk.

Outline what you would do if you found evidence of burnt mattresses, clothing or furniture in a client's home, according to your agency's policies and procedures.

Research your agency's policy in relation to the safe use of electrical appliances in clients' homes.

Section 4 Smoke alarms

Summary

- Only working smoke alarms save lives.
- Home owners and landlords have a legal responsibility to comply with their state/territory smoke alarm legislation.
- Fire risk in homes is the greatest at night when people are asleep; correct placement of smoke alarms in homes will decrease this risk.
- Smoke alarms should:
 - comply with the Australian Standard symbol
 - be tested once a month
 - be dusted or vacuumed (around the smoke alarm vents) in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
 - have their battery changed once a year
 - be replaced after ten years.
- Community sector workers should refer clients at risk of a fire in their home to their supervisor.

Self-check questions

1. How does a smoke alarm increase fire safety?
2. How often should smoke alarms be tested?
3. Why would a smoke alarm occasionally 'beep beep, beep'?
4. What is the advice in relation to smoke alarms?
5. What is the advice in relation to smoke alarms in homes where someone is caring for a person who has a disability?
6. Who would you contact about a client living in public housing whose smoke alarm was not working?

Activities

Research your agency's policy for the identification of people without a smoke alarm (for example, referral, capacity to install).

Identify your agency's policy in relation to smoke alarm maintenance for clients.

Using the house plans provided below, appropriately place smoke alarms in the following homes.

Diagram 1 - Two bedroom unit/ apartment/flat/house

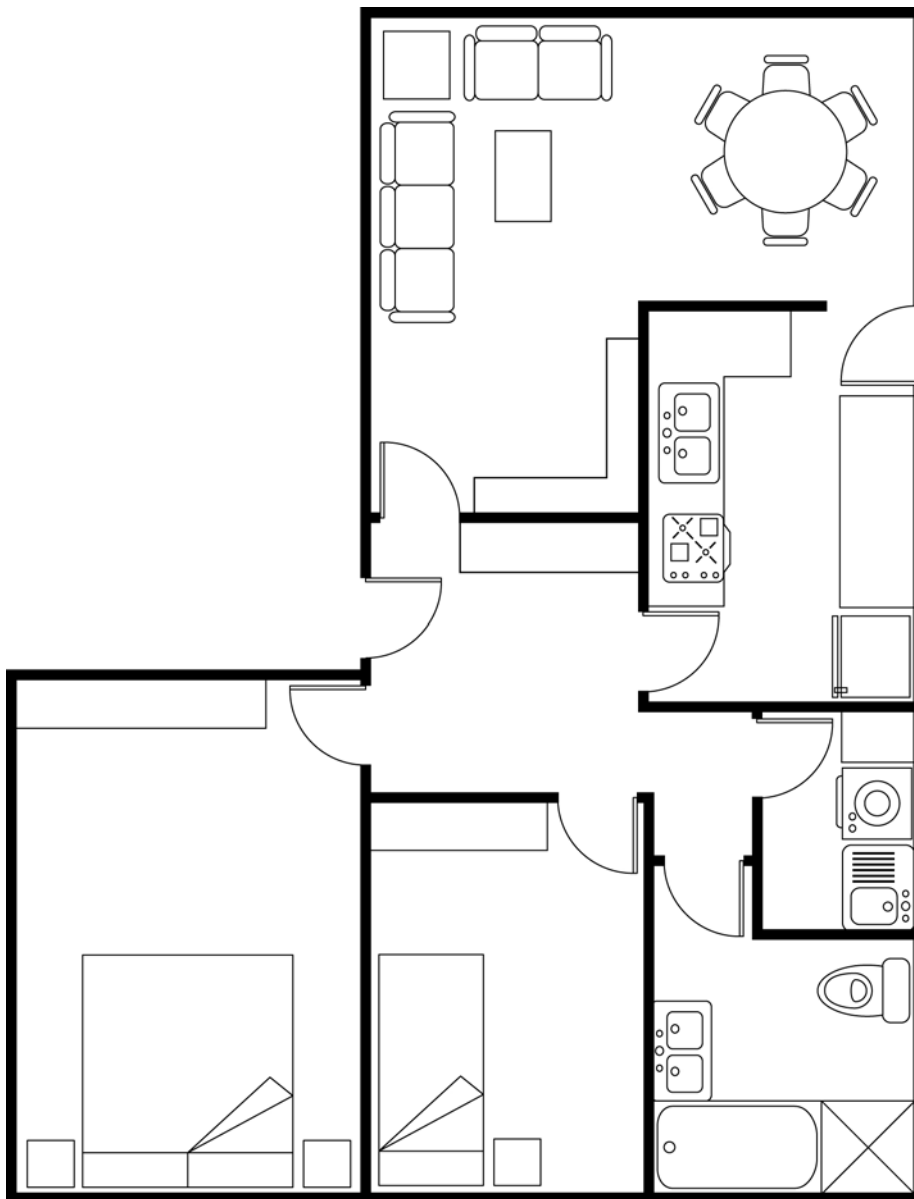


Diagram 2 - Bungalow/bedsit

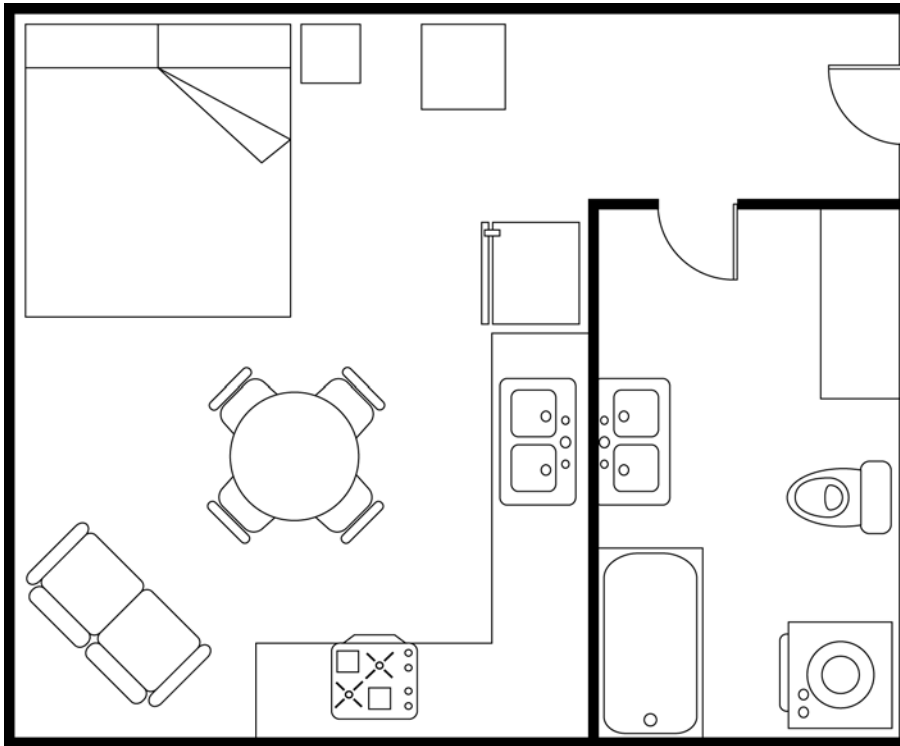


Diagram 3 - Three bedroom house

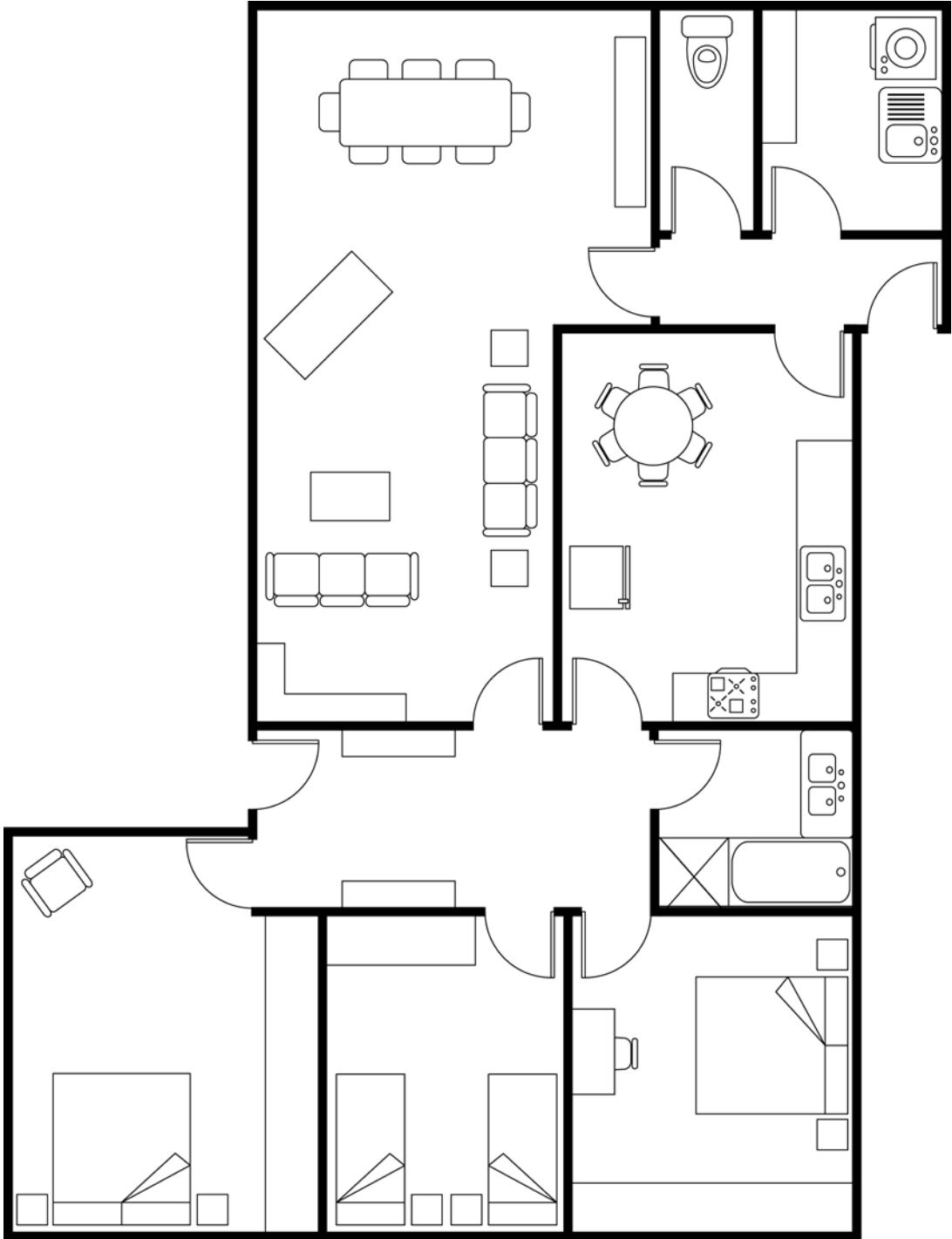
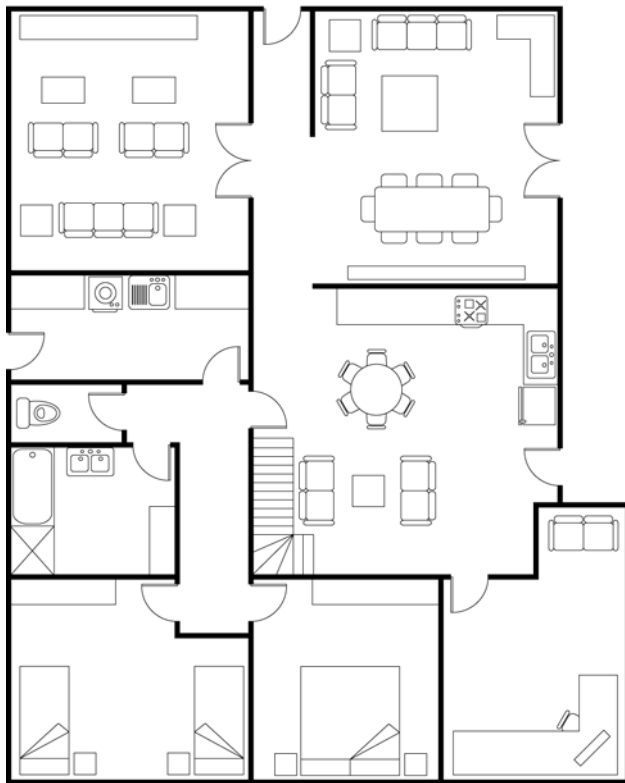


Diagram 4 - Two storey, four bedroom house

Ground floor



Second storey

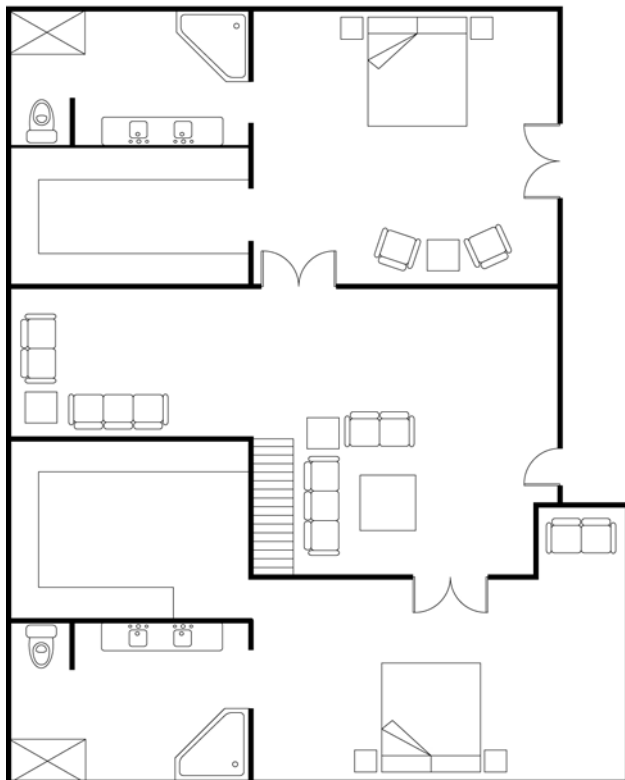
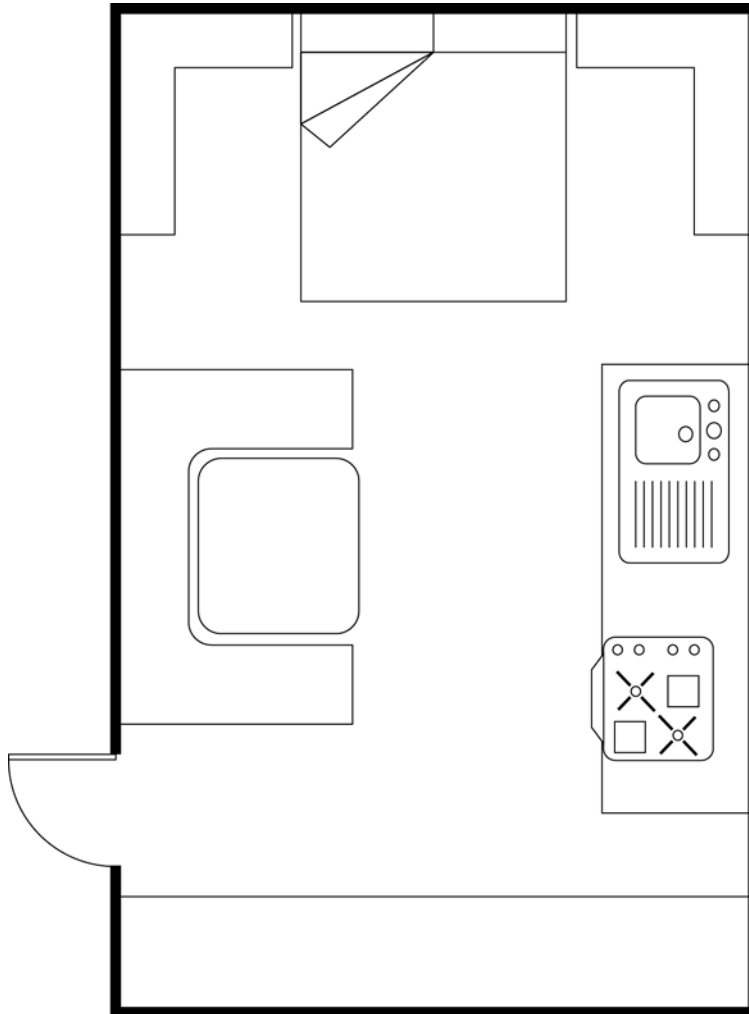


Diagram 5 - Caravan



Identify what type of smoke alarms you have in your own home (photo-electric, ionisation, battery, hard wired with battery back-up).

Investigate if a subsidy exists in your state/territory for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing to purchase an appropriate smoke alarm.

The public housing authority in your state/territory will have specific policy in relation to the maintenance of smoke alarms in their housing stock - identify the contact point for your clients who may wish to report a maintenance issue with a smoke alarm.

Self-check answers

Section 1 - Fire

1. **How long do fire services estimate that it takes from the start of a house fire to full involvement of the fire in the room of origin?**

Fire services estimate that there is little time (there may only be minutes) from the start of a house fire to full involvement of the fire in the room of origin.

2. **Fire services aim to ...?**

Fire services aim to:

- actively promote fire safety prevention information to the community to reduce the potential of a fire occurring
- improve community safety by engaging in community activities to ensure individuals are prepared and can respond appropriately to a fire
- confine the fire to the room of origin and reduce the spread of fire to the entire structure
- participate in the recovery process after a fire.

3. **How is fire spread from one point to another?**

The transfer of heat causes fire to spread from one point to another.

Section 2 - Home fire safety: High risk groups

1. **When are fatal fires in the home more likely to occur?**

Fatal fires in the home are more likely to occur at night when people are asleep.

2. **When are fire injuries in the home more likely to occur?**

While the rate of fire injuries in Australia was generally evenly spread across the calendar year, there was a slight rise in this rate in the 'cooler months from June to August' (29.5%).

The time of the day when the 'number of fire injuries peaked was between 5.00 pm and 9.00 pm' (25.2%) when people cook their evening meal.

3. **Who are the high fire risk groups for fatal fires in the home?**

The high fire risk groups for fatal fires in the home are:

- people aged 65 years and over
- children aged between 0-4 years
- adults affected by alcohol consumption.

4. Who are the high fire risk groups for fire injuries in the home?

The following groups are most 'at risk' of being injured in a residential fire:

- males
- young children aged 0-4 years
- adults aged 20-44 years
- older adults (65+ years)
- low socio-economic status
- poor educational background
- ethnic minorities
- individuals who smoke
- individuals who drink excessively.

5. What are some of the most common causes of fire in preventable residential fire fatalities?

Common causes of fire in preventable residential fire fatalities are:

- heater/open fire/lamp
- smoking materials/equipment
- electrical fault.

6. What are some of the types of heat ignition in preventable residential fire injuries?

The types of heat ignition in preventable residential fire injuries in Australia are:

- properly operating electrical equipment
- gas-fuelled equipment
- cigarettes
- candles
- electrical equipment arcing/overloading
- lighters
- matches.

Section 3 - Behaviour in the home that may contribute to fire injury and/or fatality

1. What are some of the fire risk factors associated with older people?

Older people:

- may experience impaired hearing, diminished vision and poorer sense of smell, which affects their ability to identify a fire
- may be affected by memory loss or poor cognition
- may be affected by mobility issues, which reduce their capacity to escape safely and quickly if a fire occurs in their home
- may be more likely to economise and use older appliances, such as portable heaters and electric blankets

- are more likely to live in older homes, which may not include features such as an electrical safety switch or may be unable/unwilling/unaware of the need for home maintenance
- have difficulty installing and maintaining working smoke alarms
- may reject or not relate to their risk factor and the fire safety information targeted at them
- may experience difficulties with reading or writing English and therefore be unable to access fire safety information
- may be reluctant to ask for assistance - even though the need for assistance will increase with age as the likelihood of living alone increases with age.

2. What are some of the fire risk factors associated with children under 5 years of age?

Children under 5 years of age may:

- be at higher risk in their home environment, which is determined by their parent's social and financial background
- be more likely to be involved in fire play due to natural curiosity
- have a developmental disadvantage as they are not able to react appropriately and escape a house fire - they require assistance from an older family member
- be left unsupervised near cooking and heating sources
- have parents who are unable to access mainstream fire safety information due to their cultural and linguistic background
- be at higher risk due to their access to cigarette lighters, matches, candles and other sources of ignition.

3. What are some of the fire risk factors associated with people affected by alcohol and other drugs (including medication)?

People who smoke or are affected by alcohol and other drugs (including medication) may:

- fail to properly extinguish butts
- lack insight into their behaviour and actions
- have a diminished capacity to identify if a fire has started
- be unable to respond quickly in a fire
- be unable to evacuate safely in a fire.

4. What are some of the fire risk factors associated with people who experience social and financial disadvantage?

People who experience social and financial disadvantage may:

- consider fire safety to be a low priority
- be unable to access basic home fire safety information
- use old appliances, which are unsafe
- be unable to afford repairs and maintenance
- use unusual methods of heating, cooking and lighting - in the hope of saving costs
- participate in activities that increase their fire risk
- have poor or no social networks/supports/contacts
- have limited access to resources to ensure their safety such as secure housing.

5. **What fire safety prevention information could you give to clients who use candles, oil burners or incense?**

Fire safety prevention information for clients who use candles, oil burners or incense:

- always supervise burning candles, oil burners or incense
- use candles, oil burners and incense on a stable non combustible surface (such as a plate or special holder) and only use non combustible holders
- keep candles, oil burners and incense away from curtains and windows
- use candles, oil burners or incense away from children and pets.

6. **What are the fire risks associated with household hoarding?**

In hoarding households, the high fuel load contained in these homes:

- increases the chance of ignition
- reduces the occupant's ability to escape
- restricts access for firefighters.

7. **Deadlocked doors are a fire risk - what information would you give to clients to maintain their fire safety and security in the home?**

To maintain fire safety and security in the home, clients should be advised to:

- never deadlock doors when home and keep the keys in the deadlock when home
- install deadlocks that can be opened from the inside without keys
- use security doors with the Australian Standards symbol and a snib option to avoid double locking both the security door and the front door
- limit the number of keys needed to open deadlocks
- have good exterior lighting
- make sure the number of the home is clearly visible, should emergency service/s need to locate the home
- replace fixed security screens with options that permit quick opening if a fire or other emergency occurs
- keep security screens up when home
- ensure that any window security grilles and screens readily open outwards from the inside.

8. **The fire risk for smokers is particularly significant - how would you assist clients who smoke at home, to do so safely?**

Clients who smoke at home should be advised to:

- establish a safe smoking area
- put cigarette butts and cigar butts in water before putting them in the rubbish bin
- put out cigarette butts completely
- not smoke in a home where oxygen therapy is used, as this is extremely dangerous
- use heavy, high sided ashtrays on a stable surface.

Section 4 - Smoke alarms

1. **How does a smoke alarm increase fire safety?**

A smoke alarm increases fire safety because it provides an early warning of a fire.

2. **How often should smoke alarms be tested?**

Smoke alarms should be tested once a month by pressing the test button with a broom handle to make sure the battery and the alarm sounder are operating.

3. **Why would a smoke alarm occasionally 'beep beep, beep'?**

Smoke alarms occasionally 'beep beep, beep' when the battery is going flat and needs to be replaced or the entire unit needs to be replaced.

4. **What is the advice in relation to smoke alarms?**

Smoke alarms should:

- comply with the Australian Standard symbol
- be tested once a month
- be dusted or vacuumed (around the smoke alarm vents) in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- have their battery changed once a year
- be replaced after ten years.

5. **What is the advice in relation to smoke alarms in homes where someone is caring for a person who has a disability?**

Where the primary carer sleeps in a separate room, a smoke alarm should also be installed outside the room where the primary carer sleeps.

If a person who has a disability sleeps with the door closed then a smoke alarm should also be installed inside the person's bedroom.

6. **Who would you contact about a client living in public housing whose smoke alarm was not working?**

For a client living in public housing whose smoke alarm was not working, you would contact your supervisor and the public housing authority, in accordance with your agency's policies and procedures about reporting faults and problems in a client's home.