READY AT HOME · VOLUME 8

Fire Safety & Security

Alarms, escape plans, extinguishers

Smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms: where and how many
A family escape plan you've actually practised
Extinguishers, chip pan fires, batteries and home security



THE SERIES

0 Start Here	1 Just Add Water	2 Power Cuts & Storms	3 Water & Sanitation	4 Cooking & Warmth	5 First Aid	6 Symptoms & Home Care	7 Home Systems & Repairs
8 Fire Safety & Security	9 Communications	10 Grab Bags & Kits	11 Pantry & Stockpile	12 Outdoor Skills	13 Kids, Morale & Wellbeing	14 Offline Knowledge &	15 Other Emergencies

Edition 2 · Nov 2026 · Free at readyathome.info · Emergency: 112 or 999 · Licensed CC BY-NC 4.0: free to copy and share, not to sell.

Contents

1. Alarms 3

2. Escape plan 4

3. Fighting small fires 4

For most homes . . . 5

Chip pan or oil fire . . . 5

4. Common causes 6

5. Home security 6

Simple upgrades . . . 6

Documents pack . . . 7

6. Our escape plan 7

Emergency numbers & the series 8

The Ready At Home series . . . 8

1. Alarms

House fires most often start at night while people are asleep, and smoke spreads much faster than flames. A working alarm wakes you early, which gives you time to get everyone out calmly.



- A smoke alarm on every floor, in the hall and landing, and in any room where someone sleeps with electrics on (TV, chargers).
- A heat alarm in the kitchen (smoke alarms there go off with toast).
- A carbon monoxide alarm in every room with a fuel-burning appliance and near bedrooms.
- Interlinked alarms (when one sounds, they all do) are best in two-storey houses.

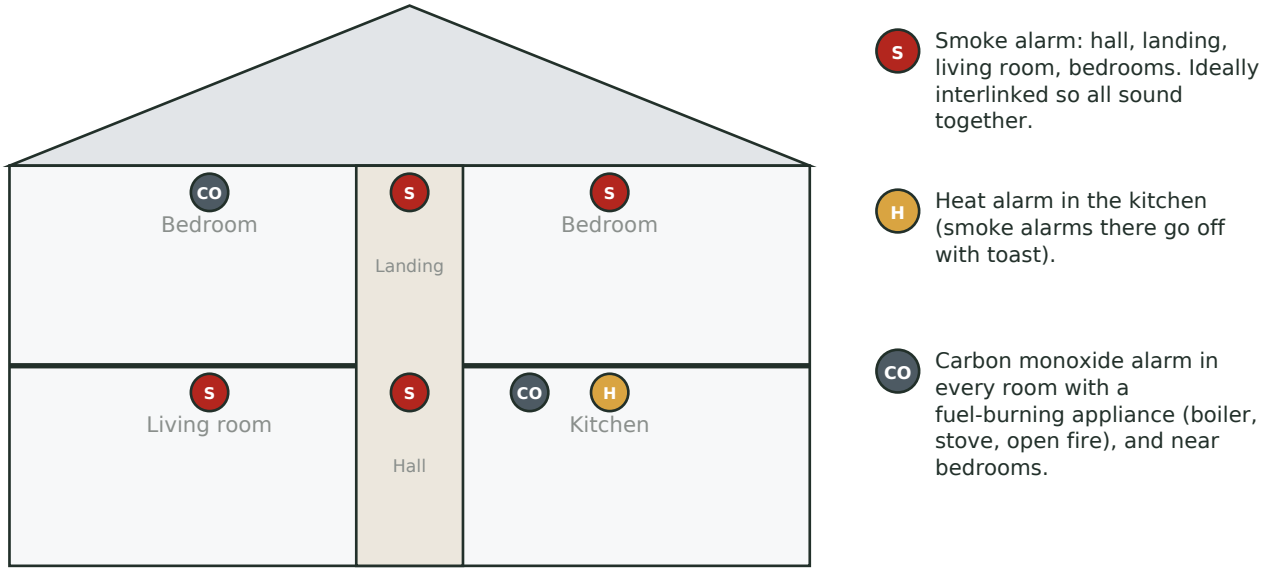
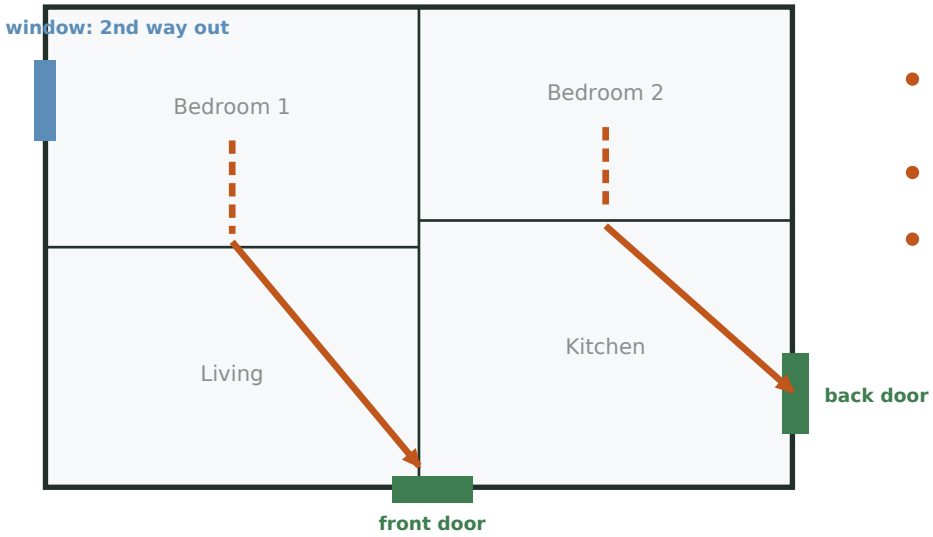


Figure 1. Where to fit alarms.

Job	How often
Press the test button on every alarm	Weekly or monthly
Vacuum dust out of alarm vents	Every 6 months
Replace 9 V batteries (if not sealed 10-year units)	Yearly
Replace the whole alarm	Every 10 years (date on the back); CO alarms per the label (often 7-10)

2. Escape plan



- Draw your own plan: two ways out of every room where possible.
- Keep keys for doors and window locks in the same place, near the door.
- Keep the escape route clear (no bikes or boxes in the hall).
- Practise twice a year, including at night with lights off.

Figure 2. Example escape plan. Draw your own on the grid at the end of this handbook.

1 Shout 'FIRE!'

Wake everyone. Don't stop to collect belongings or find the cause.

2 Feel the door

Back of the hand. If it's hot, don't open it: use your second way out.

3 Get low

Smoke rises. Crawl where the air is cleaner. Close doors behind you.

4 Get out, stay out

Go to the meeting point. Never go back in for anyone or anything.

5 Call 112

From outside. Tell them if anyone is still inside and where.

6 Trapped?

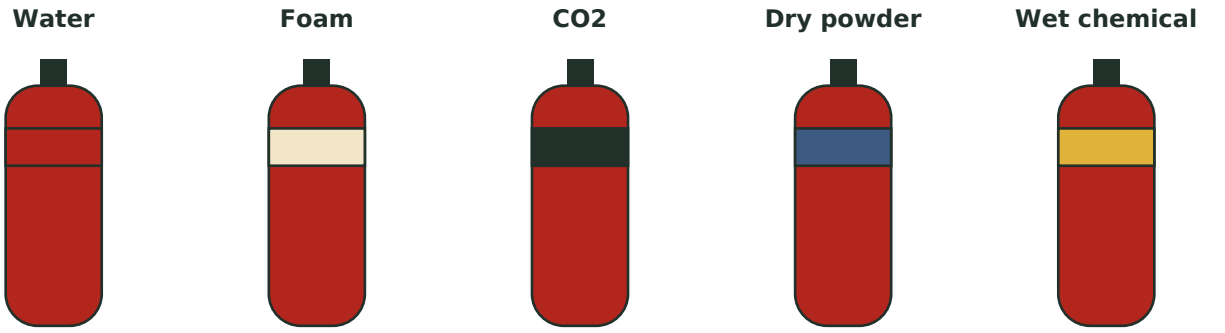
Close the door, put towels at the bottom, go to the window, call 112 and shout for help.

Figure 3. If the alarm goes off at night.

3. Fighting small fires

Only if it's safe

Only tackle a fire if it's small (smaller than a waste-paper bin), you've raised the alarm, your exit is behind you, and you have the right extinguisher. If in doubt, get out.



EU extinguishers are red with a coloured band showing the type.

Figure 4. Extinguisher types. Class A: wood, paper, fabric. B: flammable liquids. C: gases. F: cooking oil and fat.



Fire blanket: pull the tapes, hold it up to shield your hands, lay it over the pan.



Extinguisher: Pull, Aim at the base, Squeeze, Sweep.

For most homes

- A **fire blanket** in the kitchen (wall-mounted, away from the cooker).
- A **2 kg dry powder or foam extinguisher** in the hall or kitchen exit, and one in the garage, car or workshop.
- Learn **PASS**: Pull the pin, Aim at the base of the fire, Squeeze the handle, Sweep side to side.

Chip pan or oil fire

1. Turn off the heat, if you can do it safely.
2. Never move the pan.
3. Never throw water on it: the water turns to steam instantly and throws burning oil out of the pan.
4. Cover completely with a fire blanket or damp tea towel and leave for at least 30 minutes.
5. If it's out of control, get out, close the door and call 112.

4. Common causes

Risk	Prevention
Cooking	Never leave the hob unattended. Turn pan handles in. Keep tea towels away.
Heaters	Keep 1 m from curtains, furniture and drying clothes. Never cover them.
Candles	Stable holder, away from curtains, never left lit in an empty room. LED is safer.
Open fires & stoves	Sweep chimneys at least once a year. Use a fireguard. Let ash cool fully in a metal bucket outside.
Electrics	Don't overload sockets or daisy-chain extension leads. Unroll cable reels fully.
Lithium batteries (e-bikes, scooters, power tools)	Use the original charger. Charge while you're awake, on a hard surface, not in the hall or escape route. Stop using damaged or swollen batteries.
Smoking	Never in bed. Use heavy ashtrays; wet the butts before binning.

5. Home security

Lock up
Lock doors and windows when out and at night. Don't leave keys near the letterbox.

Light it
Motion-sensor lights at the front and back. Timers on lamps when away.

Cameras
Wired or local-recording cameras keep working if Wi-Fi is blocked.

Valuables
Photograph and mark them (postcode marker). A fixed safe for documents.

Look lived-in
Cancel deliveries when away; ask a neighbour to move the bins.

Community Alert
Join your local Community Alert or Text Alert scheme.

Report it
Suspicious activity: your local Garda station. Crime in progress: 112.

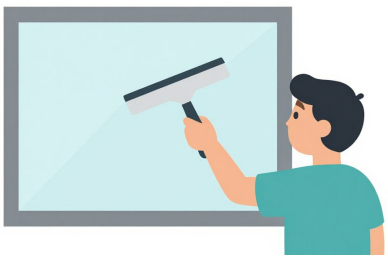
Personal alarms
Loud alarms on keys for anyone walking alone.

Figure 5. Simple security that works.

Simple upgrades



Key lockbox
A police-approved (Sold Secure or LPS 1175) key safe by the door lets a carer, neighbour or family get in if you're ill or locked out. Mount it out of view from the road and change the code from the default.



Window film and mesh
Clear security or anti-shatter film holds broken glass together after a storm or break-in. Security mesh or grilles suit ground-floor back windows and sheds; keep at least one window in each room openable for escape.

Personal alarms
Pocket alarms (130 dB, pull-pin) are cheap and loud. Clip one to keys for anyone walking alone, and keep one by the bed of an older relative so they can attract a neighbour.

Documents pack

Keep originals in a fire-resistant document bag or safe, with copies stored securely online or on an encrypted USB stick in your grab bag.

☐ Passports and driving licences	☐ Birth and marriage certificates
☐ PPS numbers	☐ Insurance policies (house, car, health)
☐ Property deeds / mortgage or tenancy documents	☐ Bank details and account contacts
☐ Prescriptions and medical summaries	☐ Vaccination records
☐ Vehicle registration (log book)	☐ Photos of valuables (for insurance)
☐ Wills and power of attorney	☐ Pet microchip and vet details

6. Our escape plan

Draw each floor, mark two ways out of every room, the meeting point, and where keys are kept. Practise it.

Emergency numbers & the series

Service	Number	Use it for
Emergency services	**112 or 999**	Ambulance, Garda, fire, coast guard. Works from any phone, any network.
ESB Networks	1800 372 999	Power cuts, fallen or damaged lines (24/7)
Gas Networks Ireland	1800 20 50 50	Smell of gas (24/7). Call from outside the house.
Uisce Éireann (Irish Water)	1800 278 278	Water outages, burst mains, boil-water notices
HSELive	1800 700 700	Health service information
Public Poisons Line	01 809 2166	Advice if someone has swallowed or touched something harmful (8am-10pm daily)
Samaritans	116 123	Anyone struggling to cope (24/7)
Text About It	Text HELLO to 50808	Free text support (24/7)
Childline	1800 66 66 66	Children and young people up to 18 (24/7)
Your county council	_____	Roads, flooding, local emergency centres
Met Éireann	met.ie / Met Éireann app	Weather warnings

Numbers checked November 2026. Write in your county council's number above, and your own local numbers (GP, out-of-hours doctor, pharmacy, vet, neighbours) in Volume 0.

The Ready At Home series

Vol	Title	What it covers
0	Start Here	Household plan & emergency numbers
1	Just Add Water	Home-dehydrated emergency meals
2	Power Cuts & Storms	Getting through long outages
3	Water & Sanitation	Storing, treating, toilets
4	Cooking & Warmth	Without mains power
5	First Aid	Step-by-step emergency care
6	Symptoms & Home Care	Red flags, minor illness, medicines
7	Home Systems & Repairs	Shut-offs, leaks, storm damage, floods
8	**Fire Safety & Security**	Alarms, escape plans, extinguishers
9	Communications	Family plan, radios, signals
10	Grab Bags & Kits	72-hour, car, child & pet kits
11	Pantry & Stockpile	A 30-day food store you rotate
12	Outdoor Skills	Fire, shelter, knots, navigation
13	Kids, Morale & Wellbeing	Keeping people okay
14	Offline Knowledge & Media	Libraries, maps & media without internet
15	Other Emergencies	Radiation, chemicals, heat, illness, cut off

This series gives general preparedness guidance. It is not a substitute for professional medical, electrical, gas or structural advice, or for a certified first-aid course. In an emergency, call 112 or 999 and follow the call-taker's instructions.

Licence. Ready at Home is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). You are free to print, copy, share and adapt it for your household, community group, school or club, as long as you credit Ready at Home (readyathome.info) and do not sell it or use it for commercial purposes. Full licence: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0.