



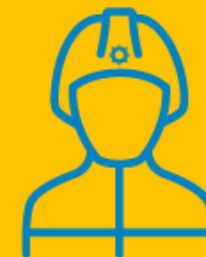
**West Sussex**  
Fire and Rescue  
[www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire)

# Emollients and Fire Safety

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### Head of Prevention

12<sup>th</sup> March 2023





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## People Most At Risk from Fire

### Presence of flammable materials



Emollient creams, home oxygen, airflow mattresses and incontinence pads are all **highly flammable materials** and will contribute to the speed and severity of a fire.

\* ONS Data

### Living alone or with reduced mobility



People living alone are at greater risk from harm and those who are less mobile will struggle to escape a fire.

**People aged over 80 are almost 4x more likely to die as a result of a fire in their home (2018/19).\***

### Smoking



Smoking in armchairs, sofas and in bed is a large factor in fires started by cigarettes.

**In 2018/19, smoking was the cause of 34% of fire-related fatalities at home.\***

Emollients and skin creams are especially a fire safety concern when used by people who spend extended periods in a bed or armchair due to illness or impaired mobility

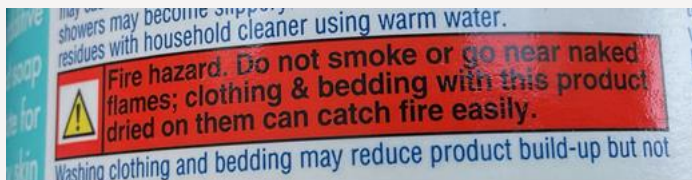


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- Unsafe use of paraffin-containing and paraffin-free emollients can result in serious or fatal injuries from fire
- When fabric with dried-on emollient comes into contact with a naked flame, the resulting fire burns quickly and intensely
- Data shows that products containing less than 50% paraffins have been associated with fatal burns and paraffin-free products also have a fire accelerant effect in tests when emollient residue builds up on fabric and the fabric is ignited
- Scientific testing shows that fabric burns quicker and hotter when contaminated with emollients. These fabrics include clothing, towelling, bandages or bedding and soft furnishings
- Chances of survival depend on severity of a burn injury which is assessed by its depth, extent and location, the patient's age and the presence of other injuries or diseases





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## What can you do?

- People should continue to use emollients but to avoid serious injury, it's important to avoid any naked flame
- Anyone using emollients or skin creams regularly should keep well away from fire, naked flames or heat sources. A build up of residue on bedding, clothing and dressings can increase flammability
- Emollient users shouldn't smoke, consider e-cigs if not ready to quit
- Loose clothing can easily catch fire – take care not to lean over a hot hob and roll up sleeves if possible when cooking
- Keep candles away from clothing, including when lighting them
- Sit at least one metre away from a heater – sitting too close could easily set light to clothes or the chair. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Be aware that regular washing of fabrics does not totally remove the risk
- When dispensing emollients make the patient aware of the risk-warning on the side of the product
- Sign post patients with disability or long term health condition to either East or West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service





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You are almost 9 times more likely to die in an accidental fire in your home with out a smoke detector. Have one on every level, including the loft

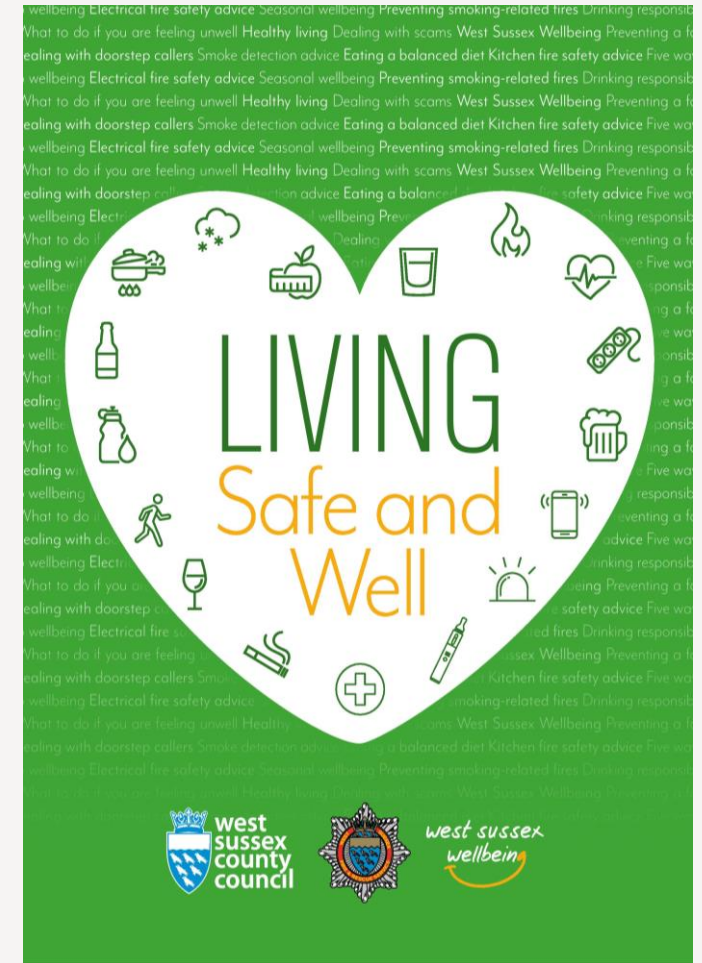
A free home visit, with personal fire safety advice and free equipment in most cases

West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service

- [Emollients and paraffin-based skin creams - West Sussex County Council](#)
- [Safe and Well Visit - West Sussex County Council](#)

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service

- [Make Your Home Safer | East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service \(esfrs.org\)](#)



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