

SHROPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

FIRE SAFETY ADVICE SHEET

CARAVAN AND MOBILE HOME – FIRE SAFETY

Introduction

Caravans can be potentially more hazardous in a fire than a house because they are smaller and more confined, with minimal fire resisting separation between compartments.

If a fire breaks out in a caravan or mobile home it is always serious. A fire frequently spreads rapidly in the confined space, fed by the many flammable materials that are part of the structure and its contents. Tragically, on too many occasions, it also claims lives. It is therefore, essential that a smoke alarm is fitted and maintained to give early warning of a fire.

However, the truth is that these types of home, whether used for holidays or permanent living accommodation, can be as safe as any other property, provided the right fire safety measures are taken by those who use them.

Licensing Authorities, in co-operation with the Fire and Rescue Service, can do much to ensure that all types of sites are properly laid out and managed with fire safety in mind. National and local caravan clubs and agencies do likewise, but, in the end, fire safety in a caravan or mobile home comes down to the attitudes and actions of the people using them.

BE PREPARED

- Find out what the firefighting arrangements on the camp site are
- Make sure there is either a water or dry powder extinguisher located inside the caravan near the door and a fire blanket located adjacent to the cooking area
- Ensure a smoke alarm is fitted and working
- Keep a torch handy for emergencies, don't use candles
- Keep everything tidy and in its place. Make sure your route out is clear at all times and that everyone knows and can operate escape windows and doors
- Make a fire plan and ensure everyone is aware of what to do in case of fire
- Ensure everyone is familiar with the site fire routine and location of fire fighting equipment
- Ensure gas and electrical appliances are regularly maintained in accordance with the manufacturers instructions

SPACE BETWEEN CARAVANS

To prevent fire spread should an incident occur, every caravan should be a minimum distance of 6 metres from adjacent caravans. Porches may protrude 1 metre into the 6 metre space and should be of the open type.

Where awnings are used, the distance between any part of the awning and adjacent caravans should not be less than 3 metres.

LIQUID PETROLEUM GAS (LPG)

- Keep cylinders outside the caravan
- Before going to bed or leaving the caravan for some time, turn off all appliances
- The cylinder should also be turned off unless an appliance such as a refrigerator is designed for continuous running
- Never use a cooker or heater whilst travelling
- When changing cylinders
 - before disconnecting an empty cylinder turn off the valve
 - reconnect the full cylinder before turning on the valve
- If you suspect a leak - Use soapy water and watch for bubbles - **NEVER** use a naked flame - turn off all appliances - ventilate by opening doors and windows - do not smoke. Ensure the system is checked by a competent person prior to re-use
- Fixed appliances should be connected by fixed metal pipework and the flexible piping used to connect the cylinder must only be tubing especially designed for use with bottled gas.
- Some caravans have special ventilated inside compartments to house cylinders. Extreme care is required as gas cylinders may explode in a fire.

Further detailed information on LPG safety is available from the trade body for LPG suppliers at www.lpga.co.uk

SOLID FUEL STOVES

- Use smokeless fuels instead of coal and other fuels which burn with a long flame
- Make sure there is a strong metal ash pan which can be removed without spilling ashes onto the caravan floor.
- Do not rapidly draw up the fire as this will overheat the flue pipe and may cause a fire
- Have the flue pipe swept regularly
- Keep clothing clear of the flue pipe

GAS HEATERS

- These should preferably be of the catalytic type with adequate guards to prevent combustible materials touching them

VENTILATION

- Adequate ventilation is often overlooked. Oil and gas appliances burn up oxygen and in some cases carbon monoxide can be produced in lethal quantities

Don't block up air vents to keep out the cold or draughts - it could prove fatal. Consider fitting a carbon monoxide (Co)detector

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

- Don't use portable heaters
- If possible switch off and unplug appliances before going to bed or if leaving the caravan for some time
- Do not use trailing flexes or route them under carpets
- Keep light bulbs away from combustible material and ensure electrical wiring is regularly maintained and appliances are in good order.
- Where mains supply is connected to a caravan there may be the added hazard of electric shock particularly if the caravan has a metal construction
- Don't use multi-way plug adaptors
- Use correctly rated fuses
- **NEVER** run appliances off of a light socket
- Shuttered sockets protect from prying fingers

PORTABLE EQUIPMENT

- For maximum safety all equipment must be fixed. The use of portable appliances - heaters, cookers or lighting - is therefore not recommended and should be avoided - Remember, portable appliances are liable to be knocked over as space is limited and they may fall over if a caravan rocks in high wind.

OTHER HAZARDS

- Take care when cooking. Don't leave fat pans unattended.
- Keep matches and lighters away from young children.
- If you smoke use metal ashtrays and don't smoke in bed.
- Do not leave children alone in a caravan.

IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE

- Get everyone out immediately
- Raise the alarm and call the Fire and Rescue Service
- Disconnect mains electricity if safe to do so
- Turn off gas cylinders if safe to do so
- Ensure the site manager/warden is informed
- Fight the fire using the equipment provided if it is safe to do so

Further information is available from the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 – Section 5, the Model Standards 2008 for Caravan Sites in England, available to download at

- Department for Communities and Local government - <http://www.communities.gov.uk> or contact
- Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service - www.shropshirefire.gov.uk

Or for general fire safety matters, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service can be reached on **01743 260 260** or via our web site at **www.shropshirefire.gov.uk**