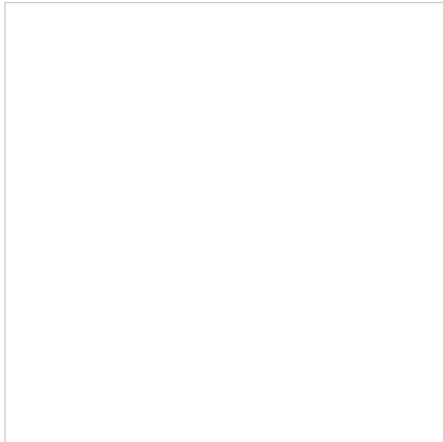




North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service joins Electrical Safety Council to offer tips for staying safe from grime fires

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The ESC to raise awareness of electrical fires in the kitchen as part of Electrical Fire Safety Week

Four million people have experienced a grime fire in their kitchen according to research released recently by the [Electrical Safety Council \(ESC\)](#) to mark Electrical Fire Safety Week.

Grime fires are the result of dirty and messy kitchens and are caused by the ignition of excess fat in cooking appliances, clutter stored by heat sources catching fire, or by dirt, dust and crumbs blocking ventilation and causing products to overheat.

As grime fires are often caused by hidden dirt or overlooked mess, they can easily be avoided by thoroughly cleaning the kitchen on a regular basis and tidying away mess. Yet research from the ESC shows that a third of people can't remember the last time their oven or the area behind their fridge was cleaned, one in seven admit to regularly blocking vents with objects, and one in ten even confess to leaving flammable items next to heat sources.

These unseen or overlooked fire risks are particularly worrying since more than half of all house fires are started by kitchen appliances (21,036 out of 37,061 house fires last year)[iv]. The build up of dust, dirt and grime is also responsible for thousands of serious burns or broken electrical appliances in the kitchen.

Hectic lifestyles are often to blame for not cleaning the kitchen properly, and common excuses include being too busy, battling other priorities or relying on other members of the household. And a fifth of people confess to putting themselves at risk because they are just too lazy to clean as well as they should.

It is families who are particularly hard-pushed for time, with two fifths confessing that they find it difficult to keep their house clean and tidy – extending to two thirds of parents with children under five years old.

Emma Apter from the Electrical Safety Council added: *“People are increasingly busy and have so much going on it's easy for cleaning to take a backseat, but a build-up of grime, dust and even food crumbs in kitchen appliances can cause fires or stop them working.*

“Grime can often build up without you realising, so you might think you have a clean kitchen but if you look closer there can be an electrical fire waiting to happen. I'd urge everyone to clean their appliances as often as possible, and take care not to leave objects lying around in the kitchen that could ignite or block ventilation.”

Group Manager Peter Hudson from [North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#) said: *“It can be hard to stay on top of household chores with busy work and life schedules, particularly for families with young children. However, we are regularly called to fires in the home that start in the kitchen, so I would strongly urge everyone to be vigilant to the hidden dangers of dirt and grime.*

“We recommend you make time at least once a year to clean out any ventilation systems you use in your kitchen, as well as the space behind fridges and freezers. Throughout the year it's also important to make sure items aren't stored on top of microwaves, or in front of its vents, as well as ensuring there isn't a build up of grime in ovens and toasters.”

The ESC conducted the research, to raise awareness of electrical fires in the kitchen as part of Electrical Fire Safety Week (23rd – 27th September 2013), run in partnership with the Government's Fire Kills campaign. As electricity is the cause of 350,000 serious injuries each year and half of all house fires, the charity is urging everyone to follow their simple tips to stay safe in the kitchen more broadly:

- Clean your oven and grill on a regular basis to avoid the build up of excess fat
- Check your plug sockets are not overloaded with too many electrical appliances as this can lead to



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- overheating
- Avoid storing objects on top of appliances like the microwave, which can block ventilation
- Defrost your fridge and freezer at least once a year to ensure these appliances continue to work properly
- Ensure you have a working smoke detector in case something does go wrong