

# Downlights (Home Owners)

Old or poorly installed ceiling downlights are thought to cause at least one house fire every week in Western Australia. They can set fire to dust and litter collected in roof insulation or timbers which burn in the roof space above smoke alarms. These fires can go undetected until it is too late. Often, people only know their house is on fire when flaming material comes through air conditioning vents or the ceiling collapses. It makes a safe escape more difficult and causes significant damage.

## How can a fire start in the roof space?

A roof space fire starts above the ceiling material but beneath the roof tiles or tin. There are a number of things in a roof space that may cause a fire. These include water pipes, heater flues, heat from the back of downlights and electrical circuits that have been damaged or from poor workmanship, white ants or rodents. If downlights are installed correctly and a safe distance is kept from combustible material, there is no risk of fire.

## What are the main causes of downlight fires?

A fire can start when the heat given off by downlights comes in contact with combustible material including insulation, leaf litter, dust or roof timbers. DFES research shows downlights can heat up to more than 240 degrees. Note: When installed correctly, downlights do not pose a fire risk. There are Australian Standards to ensure safe installation of downlights.

**It is illegal to install your own downlights. You must use a licensed electrical contractor.**



### In the event of a fire

- Crawl low under smoke
- Assist or alert any people in danger, but only if it is safe to do so
- Go to your safe meeting place, such as your letter box
- Call **000** (triple zero)
- Wait for firefighters to arrive
- Do not re-enter a burning house under any circumstances

## What can I do to prevent a downlight fire in my home?

- Always use a licensed electrical contractor and ask to see their Licence. Ask a licensed electrical contractor to inspect all downlights and transformers
- Ensure a non-combustible or mechanical barrier is installed to prevent insulation or other combustible material covering or touching downlights
- Always use fittings and guards that meet Australian Standards
- Following any work in your roof space, request your licensed electrical contractor or insulation installer to inspect all downlights and transformers for damage to ensure they are clear of insulation or other combustible material
- Consider replacing 240 volt incandescent globes with compact fluorescent or LED globes that produce less heat
- Consider replacing 12 volt halogen (dichroic) globes with Light Emitting Diode lamps (LED) that produce considerably less heat

For more information on downlights, visit the **EnergySafety** website [www.energysafety.wa.gov.au](http://www.energysafety.wa.gov.au) and download Energy Bulletin 42.

