



Fire safety for Indian associations and centres

It is important to keep you and your community safe when you are hosting events and conducting rituals.

This guide aims to provide you with information on how you can manage fire risks and protect your community.

At Fire and Emergency New Zealand, we want to support you to continue to practice your religion and conduct rituals in New Zealand as safely as possible.

We are also here to help. If you do have or see a fire don't hesitate to call 111. Fire and Emergency New Zealand does not charge for our trucks attending an incident.

Havan fire safety

Includes homam, homa, yajna and yajana ritual

When using a havan kund for a wedding or any other event, it is important to plan how you will manage any fire risks. Below are some tips to help keep you and your community safe.

Before lighting the havan kund

- During weddings, it is important to have enough space around the havan kund to ensure the couples clothing is not in danger of catching fire.
 - We recommend marking out at least a one metre zone on the floor around the kund.
- Make sure to use a havan kund stand and/or place a fire resistant board, tile or concrete block under your havan kund before using it. Make sure that whatever you are using underneath your havan kund is larger than havan kund itself.
- Make sure the room you are using the havan kund in has proper ventilation.
- Before lighting the havan kund, assign one or two people to manage the fire and add wood to the havan during the ritual.



When the havan kund is burning

Take the following steps to ensure you and your community are safe while your havan kund is burning.

- Only use small pieces of kindling that do not exceed the perimeter of the kund.
- The Havan kund can get very hot. Make sure you have protection on your hands when handling it.
- Never leave the havan kund unattended. Make sure that while it is burning inside the house someone is always monitoring it.
- Always have an adult supervising young people while the havan kund is burning.

Following the ritual

Once you have completed the ritual with your havan kund take the following steps reduce the risk of an unwanted fire.

- If you are moving the havan kund outside or elsewhere in the centre, make sure your pathway is clear and the people carrying the havan kund know where you are putting it.
- Make sure the spot you plan to leave it in is flat, stable, away from any flammable materials and not too windy.
- Once the flame in your havan kund is completely out, completely cover the ashes with water and leave them for at least three days before throwing them in the rubbish.



Aarti safety

Having a good plan for how to conduct aarti will help to prevent injuries or fires.

Always use the correct vessel for aarti – an aarti thali will help to protect whoever is holding it so they do not get burned and/or drop the vessel.

- During large events think about the following:
 - How many people are going to be in attendance?
 - How will people move around the room when doing aarti?
- We recommend creating a one and a half metre zone where people can do aarti safely.
- For those waiting, get them to form a single file line to wait their turn.
- Collect aarti donations using a separate tray, rather than using the aarti thali. You can also offer eftpos or direct debit options as well.

Puja safety

For Holika Dahan celebrations

Before your Holika Dahan celebration

- Make sure you have a robust and fire proof container to light your fire.
- Visit [checkitsalright.nz](https://www.checkitsalright.nz) to see if you can light a fire or if you require a fire permit. Remember it can take up to 10 working days to process your permit so allow ample time.
- Check the weather forecast in the lead up to your event. If it is dry or windy do not light the fire.
- Establish a three to five metre safe zone around the fire and make sure all attendees remain behind the line.
- On the day of your celebration, call your local fire station to inform them of your fire. This will prevent false call outs to your celebration.

During your Holika Dahan celebration

- Nominate specific people to manage the fire and to throw items into it. Do not allow anyone to throw items in as it can cause the fire to get out of hand.
- For the people managing the fire, ensure they have fire retardant gloves on and low flammability clothing.
- Make sure all children are supervised by an adult when they are near the fire.

Post your Holika Dahan celebration

- Before leaving the fire, make sure it is completely extinguished.
- Cover the ashes with water and leave for three days before disposing of them.

General safety

- When lighting a diya on a table, use the correct diya vessel, put down a bajot, metal tray or fire resistant board to ensure the table is not burned.
- Camphor is highly flammable and can result in a fire when used incorrectly. We recommend using a finger nails worth of camphor.

Emergency and evacuation plans

Buildings that allow public access are required to have an evacuation procedure. All people in the building must follow the evacuation procedure.

It is the building owners responsibility to maintain the means of escape from a building this means:

- Exits must be kept clear of obstacles at all times.
- Exit doors must not be locked, barred, or blocked – there can be a management system in place where doors need to be locked due to people being under care or supervision.
- Smoke-control and fire-stop doors must not be kept open (unless done so in a way that complies with the building code).
- Stairwells and passageways must not be used for storage or accumulation of waste.

Flammable cleaning liquids and other flammable materials must not be stored near the means of escape from fire for building. They must also be stored in non-combustible containers with close-fitting lids.

For more information on your legal requirements around evacuation procedures/schemes visit: onlineservices.fire.org.nz