

## Don't Drink and Fry!

Picture the scene: after a good night out and a bit worse for wear, get home and feel hungry! Head for the kitchen, start merrily cooking up a feast, move to the lounge to wait for the food to cook, but instead doze off. Things are starting to get messy in the kitchen. The smoke alarm starts its shrill wail, but because of the alcohol and in a semi-comatose state, that shrill wail just does not wake you. After all, alcohol is a powerful toxin, a central nervous system depressant, which affects our judgement and dulls the senses, resulting in not hearing the smoke alarm, or smelling the smoke.

This may sound far-fetched, but a UK study<sup>1</sup> found that in 33% of cases of deaths from fire the victim was under the influence of alcohol and that alcohol impairment contributed to the cause of fire in 25% of cases and was a factor affecting response to fire in 26% of cases. Sobering statistics....

And of course, cooking is not the only way to start a fire; falling asleep with a lit cigarette or leaving a candle or fire lit are all more likely after a heavy night's drinking. As the study shows, aside from being a contributory cause to a fire, alcohol also seriously impairs our ability to react; delays in getting out of a burning house can be fatal.

So, how to stay safe? The key is to enjoy a drink without getting so drunk that you put yourself at risk. One easy way to do this is to "Turn down the volume!" and swap to a lower strength drink so that you are drinking less units (but not less drinks!) and staying more in control. (Visit [alcohol-services.co.uk](http://alcohol-services.co.uk) for more information on "Turn down the volume!"<sup>2</sup> including suggested swaps and alternatives).

To raise awareness of the risks described above **alcohol services for the community (asc)** are linking up with Luton & Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and will be at ASDA in Dunstable on 20<sup>th</sup> August and Tesco in Leighton Buzzard on 27<sup>th</sup> August from 3pm – 6pm to promote safer drinking and fire awareness. Jane Clarke, Community Fire Safety Officer, said: "It is important that people understand how to stay safe from fire and still enjoy themselves, and working with **asc** is a way of highlighting the dangers of excessive drinking combined with everyday activities like cooking."

### References:

- 1 Source: IAS Factsheet - Alcohol & Accidents
- 2 "Turn down the volume!" is a current campaign from local alcohol agency **alcohol services for the community (asc)** demonstrating that by lowering the strength (%ABV) of your drink you can cut down on units without cutting down on drinks for a healthier and safer lifestyle.