

News Release

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Diva fire victim urges people to celebrate safely this Diwali

A victim of a diva fire which devastated their home is urging residents across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to take extra care when celebrating Bonfire Night and Diwali.

Ramandeep from Bushby, whose message comes as part of the Celebrate Safely campaign, wants to warn others of the risk of leaving diva candles unattended. She describes how nothing more than a small draft turned a normal day into one that could have very easily ended in tragedy.

She went on to say: "My mum did the morning prayers and left for work leaving the diva running. I was home alone and heard shuffling sounds. I believed it was my brother getting ready, but within minutes I heard knocking and banging.

"I opened the door to see black smoke everywhere so I closed the door and called the fire service. The prayer room was a ball of fire with the heat causing things outside the room to melt. Luckily the fire crew came quickly and put the fire out.

"We have learnt many lessons from this. It is important not to leave divas unattended and to also check you have working smoke alarms. We didn't check ours, and we had two in the house which weren't working. Now, we make sure they are working as they could have saved our house and prevented the fire from going on for so long!"

Wayne Gale, Station Manager at Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service said: "It's essential we all celebrate safely during the up and coming festive period.

"Diwali and Bonfire Night are great opportunities to celebrate and should be fun for all to enjoy. Whether out and about or at home celebrating, we want everyone to enjoy themselves safely.

“We advise everyone to take particular care when cooking, not to leave candles or divas unattended, keep any flames at a safe distance from curtains, decorations and clothing at all times and to always make sure you have working smoke alarms as they help save lives. If you are celebrating Bonfire Night, we would also recommend you attend an organised event rather than hold your own!

“We ask you to pay close attention to all aspects of your safety during this period and visit our website for more information on how to keep you and your family safe. A few minutes of your time could help protect you, your family and your friends as well as your property and belongings.”

The Celebrate Safely initiative focusses on encouraging general fire safety during Diwali as well as safety measures involving fireworks and bonfires on bonfire night.

The campaign involves Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, Leicestershire Police, Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and a number of district and borough councils across the county.

Councillor Ivan Ould, cabinet member for community safety at Leicestershire County Council, said: “We want people to enjoy the festivities over the next few months, but again we urge people to celebrate safely.

“This example just shows how easy it is for disaster strike. We all want to enjoy these celebratory periods with our friends and family, but it is important to be extra vigilant when it comes to candles, fireworks and bonfires.”

Anyone who wants to report antisocial behaviour in Leicester, Leicestershire or Rutland can call Leicestershire Police on 101 or Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.

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Notes to Editors:

Interviews can be arranged through prior arrangement with Corporate Communications on the details below. Photos of the damaged caused by the diva fire are available on request.

About the Service

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service provides emergency response, prevention and protection services from 20 stations across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Its headquarters is based in Birstall, Leicester.

The Service's prevention, education, enforcement and inspection programmes have resulted in significant reductions in the number of incidents. In the last ten years, fire-related incidents have reduced by 43 percent.

During 2016/17, the Service attended 694 road traffic collisions, of which 148 were extrications from vehicles, in addition to 2,259 fires. 272 schools were visited as part of the Service's schools programme, delivering fire and road safety education to pupils. Staff organised or took part in 1,613 community safety events, promoting fire and road safety

and arson prevention, and 145 Virtual Fatal Four (VF4) events as part of the Service's young drivers' road safety project.

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