

Tenants' handbook

Health and Safety

Introduction

Introduction

This chapter gives you important information about health and safety in your home.

It covers general safety advice, electrical and gas safety, personal safety and security, information about asbestos in the home, and fire and disease prevention

1. General safety advice

You must get permission from your Resident Services Officer before you start any home improvements, and then only use qualified engineers for gas and electrical renewal or repair work.

- Do not block air vents or airbricks, especially in winter
- Keep all medicines and chemicals (bleach, turpentine, caustic soda etc.) in a safe place preferably locked away. Return unused medicines to a local pharmacist for safe disposal
- Be realistic with DIY jobs and never leave sharp or power tools lying around
- Plan your storage so you do not have to keep heavy items on high shelves – don't handle awkward or heavy items if you have a bad back; ask a family member or neighbour to help.
- Do not tamper with fire, self closing or other safety doors, especially in kitchens
- Do not enter any restricted areas including lift rooms, water tank rooms, roofs and roof spaces
- Minimise risk of burning and scalding: be particularly aware of possible contact with open fires, cooker, kettles and many other hot surfaces. Keep hot irons, curling tongs and hair straighteners out of reach, even when cooling down.

2. Children's safety

This chapter gives you advice and tips about staying safe in your home. We carry out regular tenancy visits to ensure homes are properly used and safe and we have responsibilities to you as our tenant. You in turn have a responsibility to use your home safely and to note our advice.

Should there be any repair / maintenance issues or other health and safety concerns (e.g. tripping hazards on common areas, lifts not levelling properly etc.), please let us know us as soon as possible.

- Supervise young children at all times, especially in the bath or a garden pool. Never leave babies unattended on raised surfaces.
- Keep sharp objects, electrical appliances and other cords out of the reach of children, especially those connected to hot items.
- Keep small objects, glass and choking hazards away from children. Keep pull cords on curtains and blinds short and out of reach.
- Keep floors free of toys and obstructions that can be tripped over
- Always install the television where it cannot be pushed, pulled or knocked down.
- Keep all liquids away from TVs, DVD players, stereos, speakers, computers etc, because liquids and electricity do not mix.
- Protect and warn children about the dangers of electricity.

3. Electrical safety

Electricity can kill and causes 20,000 accidental fires in UK homes every year.

Every year roughly 70 people are killed and 350,000 seriously injured due to an electrical accident in the home.

89% of electrical fires are caused by electrical products, mainly through their misuse but also because they are unsafe, with 2.5 million UK adults experiencing electric shocks at home every year.

What we will do:

- We will carry out comprehensive electrical testing on the full electrical installation before we rent out properties
- We will secure all areas that could be dangerous and tell you not to enter those areas
- We will carry out electrical testing to the landlord's wiring supplies

What you should do:

You have a responsibility to make sure all electrical equipment is in good working order, especially because of the risks associated with second hand or old electrical appliances.

Always look out for the Kitemark safety symbol on electrical products.

Look for a legitimate safety certification label

All electrical products will have one or more safety certifications on their label if made by a legitimate manufacturer. The CE mark shows that the product meets European safety/environmental standards. It allows manufacturers to sell their products within Europe.



There are some simple rules to follow to keep you safe when using electrical appliances:

- Do not leave electrical appliances like washing machines, tumble dryers and dishwashers running during the night or when you are out.
- Electrical appliances should always be unplugged and switched off when not in use, unless the appliance is designed to remain powered (for example, a fridge or a freezer)
- Do not stock items on top of your fridge – they may fall down the back and cause overheating
- Make sure that all plugs are wired securely and that power leads are not frayed
- Do not keep flowers on top of your television or any other electrical appliances
- Watch out for any plugs or sockets that get hot and get them checked
- Keep your toaster clean and away from curtains and hangings
- Protect and warn children about the dangers of electricity
- Do not leave wires where anyone can trip over them
- Do not use electricity near water
- Do not overload sockets or leads
- Do not get plugs wet

Check your wiring:

- If wires are damaged or worn, get them repaired or replaced, otherwise they can cause electric shock, burns and fire
- Do not pull out electrical plugs by the lead or cable as this will damage the lead and can result in the plug overheating through frayed wiring

- Make sure wires are well away from heat or water and that they do not present a trip hazard
- Make sure that wires are not exposed, damaged or frayed
- Make sure appliances are earthed.
- For your safety RCD's are generally installed on your consumer units. These should be tested on a quarterly basis. This can generally be undertaken by pushing the test button on the RCD, (resetting the switch afterwards). The test button will be similar to the yellow one as shown in the picture below



Bathroom safety

Never take mains powered portable appliances, such as hairdryers, heaters or radios into a bathroom. Severe injury or death may result.

Garden safety and wet conditions:

- Never use electrical equipment in wet conditions, including lawn mowers and electrically powered devices
- Check that the socket outlet or the appliance you are using has a residual current device (RCD) protection.

An RCD (residual current device) is a potentially life saving device designed to prevent you from getting a fatal electric shock if you touch something live, such as a bare wire. It can also provide some protection against electrical fires. RCDs offer a level of personal protection that ordinary fuses and circuit breakers cannot provide.

Devices left plugged in can use electricity even when they are off or sleeping, which is both costly to you and potentially dangerous.

Loss of electrical power to your home

There could be times when you have no electrical supply to your home.

This may be a problem that only affects your home.

If you have no power supply one obvious thing to do is check with your neighbours to see if they are affected. If they are also affected, the problem may be with the electrical supplier who will deal with it once they are aware.

It is also important that you report the loss of electrical power to us in case it is a fault that we can repair.

If you do lose your power supply, make sure that you turn off and unplug any electrical appliances that were switched on when the supply went off

This includes televisions, microwave ovens, and kettles etc. It is safer for these appliances to be turned off before the power comes back on.

Using gas appliances when the electricity is off.

If the electrical power is still off at night you should not use gas cooking facilities. If you have health problems and the loss of the power supply means that aids in your home are not working, please telephone 0800 952 4444 or 020 7525 2600 immediately for advice and help.

0800 952 444 or 020 7525 2600 is the telephone number for all repair emergencies and is a freephone number available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. You can also email repairs@southwark.gov.uk

Other useful numbers

If you have lost your gas or electricity supply, you should contact your individual supplier to determine if the issue with your meter or account

If you are experiencing a power cut in your area, call UK Power networks **0800 316 3105**

Further electrical safety guidance

Electrical Safety First gives general advice on home electrical safety:

www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice/electrical-items

www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice/around-the-home/

www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice/product-registration

4. Gas safety

What we will do

It is our legal responsibility to make sure that your gas supply and any fixed gas appliances that are installed are checked, serviced and maintained and that all our contractors who work on gas appliances are competent

To meet our legal duty to ensure your safety we carry out annual inspections to all properties we own and manage every year.

You must allow access to the property to allow our officers, contractors or agents to carry out any inspection or safety check that needs to be carried out to the property.

If you repeatedly refuse us access to carry out a gas safety inspection we will apply to the court for a warrant to gain access to your home to carry out the work.

What you should do:

You will be responsible for the safe maintenance of gas appliances owned by yourself for example cookers and fires and will be expected to keep them in safe working order. A visual check will be carried out at the same time as the landlord's safety check and any safety defects found will be explained to you. You should always use a competent gas engineer registered on the Gas Safe Register to carry out any works in your home on gas appliances a list of operatives in the area can be found at www.gassaferegister.co.uk

We will annually check any property with a gas meter fitted regardless of whether appliances are fitted or not. It's your job to make sure you arrange for the disconnection of the gas meter if you don't use gas. If you don't, this will cost you money in standing charges from the supplier.

If you suspect a gas leak or smell fumes you should

- Switch off the gas at the meter and contact the national emergency gas service on 0800 111 999
- Turn off all sources of ignition and do not smoke
- Do not use electrical appliances or operate electrical switches.
- Open doors and windows to ensure you have fresh air.
- You should also report this to the council immediately on 0800 952 4444 who will send an engineer to attend and carry out any repair needed
- If any gas appliances that we have installed breaks down you should report the fault on 0800 952 4444

5. Kitchen safety

Over half of all home fires begin in the kitchen

- Use a closed electric fire with a closing lid, rather than an open pan
- Take extra care around children when boiling water or using liquids

These simple checks will help keep you, your family and your property safe:

Basic visual checks – check you've turned the cooker off:

- When you've finished cooking, double check that the cooker is switched off
- It is easy to get distracted and this can be potentially dangerous
- If you are called away from the kitchen make sure you turn the heat off under the pans

Check that your oven is clean:

- Fat, grease and dirt builds up quickly around kitchen extract fans (grilles) and cooker hood filters (if fitted) and can cause a fire, so be sure to clean your grilles and filters thoroughly and regularly.

Check your plug sockets:

- Make sure sockets are not overloaded or running too many appliances
- Too many appliances in one socket can lead to overheating and electrical fire, which can be difficult to control in a kitchen

6. Asbestos

Asbestos was widely used by the building industry for fireproofing and as an insulating material and it is still present in some of our buildings. We have carried out asbestos surveys in many dwellings to identify where it is likely to be found and have told our contractors so that they can take the necessary precautions if working in the area.

The most likely places to find asbestos in a domestic setting are:

- Wall panels and boxing covering pipes and inside boiler cupboards
- Old floor tiles
- Textured ceiling finishes (Artex)
- Boiler flues
- Old toilet cisterns and water tanks

What we will do:

- Be compliant with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and specifically the Duty to Manage to protect anyone using or working in the premises from the risks to health that exposure to asbestos causes
- Give you information about asbestos safety
- Survey our housing stock and maintain a register of those properties where we know asbestos is present.

What you should do:

You must get our permission from your Resident Services Officer before you start any home improvements. If you think something in your home may have asbestos in it, do not drill into it, sand it down, scrape it, or disturb it in any way.

If you suspect there is asbestos in your home, please contact your designated customer contact point for advice.

7. Security

What we will do:

We will sometimes fit door entry systems or closed circuit television (CCTV) to shared entrances to blocks.

These will only increase the security of your home when they are used properly.

We will inspect shared entrance doors every time we carry out an estate inspection and report any defects we find. Shared door systems get heavy wear and tear and we will renew them from time to time.

We will issue keys, key fobs, or security codes to authorised residents only. We will also charge for replacement keys or fobs.

What you should do:

Your tenancy agreement states that to protect the security of you and your neighbours, you should only allow people through the door if they live with you or are visiting you. Don't let anyone in who you don't know.

Security grilles

You must not fit any security grilles, metal bars or covers to any doors or windows without our permission.

We do not allow gates that block access to more than one home, for example, across a balcony or corridor, or that block fire exits. Where such gates are in place, we will give 24 hours' notice that we are going to remove them.

You must not fit security entrance doors (for example doors that have three or more points of locking). This is because the two levels of security delay occupants' escape and/or rescue services' entry.

If you have grilles, gates or picket fences in a communal area please make your Resident Services Officer aware, or alternatively contact 0800 952 4444 and report this, so that we can arrange removal.

8. Fire safety

Fire in people's homes kill more people than fires in any other types of buildings.

You can reduce the likelihood of a fire occurring in your home and be better prepared if a fire does occur.

You must make sure that any doors internal to the dwelling fit securely and are in working order. Make sure you close these doors especially at night.

The escape route(s) through communal areas must be kept clear and unobstructed at all times. We advise the internal escape route(s) within your dwelling are also as clear as

practicable to aid your exit should an emergency occur. Never keep 'white goods' such as fridges, freezers, microwave, dishwashers, washing machines etc in these areas.

What you should do:

- Plan your escape
- Think of how you would get out if your normal way out is blocked
- Keep escape routes clear of rubbish or bulky items at all times
- Tell everyone in the house where the door and window keys are kept
- Make sure you have stubbed out cigarettes carefully
- Never smoke in bed
- Keep matches and lighters away from children
- Fit a smoke alarm and check it regularly
- Never leave lit candles unattended
- Keep clothing away from heaters
- When cooking, don't overfill a chip pan with oil - it should never be more than one third full
- Be careful that it doesn't overheat – hot oil can catch fire easily
- Use a thermostat controlled deep fat fryer
- Never throw water on a chip pan fire

If a fire breaks out in your home:

- If your smoke alarm goes off when you are asleep, follow your escape plan and exit the dwelling
- Shout 'fire' to warn others and don't stop to pick up valuable items
- Check closed doors with the back of your hand
- Do not open the door if it feels warm, as the fire may be on the other side of the door
- Smoke can kill: get down as low as possible where the air will be clearer
- If your escape route is blocked by fire it may be safer to stay where you are until the fire brigade arrives. In this instance you must close the door and use soft materials to block any gaps to stop the smoke. Go to a window, call for help, dial 999 and wait to be rescued

For further information on preventing fires, escaping from a fire and keeping safe at home, please visit the London Fire Brigade website: www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home

If a fire breaks out in your block

The vast majority of our purpose built blocks are designed to allow you to 'stay put' should there be a fire in another part of the building.

This is because the way the building is designed, constructed and maintained, any fire that starts in a flat should stay in the flat.

If you or your family are concerned or if you are in any way affected by the fire-leave the building immediately provided it is safe to do so.

What we will do:

- Undertake fire risk assessments to the communal areas of your building
- Keep you updated with fire safety communications
- Provide clear information for you to enable you to find escape routes
- Illustrate important safety features to assist those for whom English is not their first language
- Provide your building's layout to the emergency services, to enable them to quickly find a particular flat or maisonette once inside your building
- Liaise with London Fire Brigade regarding the use of premises information plates and boxes
- Ensure appropriate signage is in place and give you information about preventing fires
- Make sure you know about fire safety

Keeping escape routes clear

We will make sure that all escape routes in communal areas are clear of waste and flammable material and we will remove anything that is blocking the escape routes in communal areas.

We may take more expensive items, such as new bikes, into storage if they are creating a fire health and safety risk. We will not repay the cost of damaged bike locks and we may charge you for getting your property back from storage.

Do not fit key opening locks on your front door as this could impede your escape route.

The council recommends you do not fit security grilles across the front entry door. A grille could prevent you and your family escaping quickly - particularly if you have a key to lock it.

Smoke alarms

London Fire Brigade will assist you in choosing and installing smoke alarms. For more information please visit their website www.london-fire.gov.uk/SmokeAlarms.asp

For your safety we would recommend that you regularly test your smoke alarms (minimum quarterly) to ensure they are in full working order. This can generally be undertaken by pushing the test button on the smoke alarm detector or on the wall mounted switch (where fitted).

Alterations and improvements

As explained in your tenancy agreement you must not alter and improve the structure and fabric of your home, unless you have written permission from the Housing Department and Southwark Building Control - this includes the fitting of down-lights. To obtain the required written permission, please contact your Resident Services Officer.

Bin store rooms

Bin stores contain combustible waste and may be vulnerable to accidental or deliberate fire setting. Our policy is to keep the doors to waste areas shut at all times and locked if appropriate. Only authorised staff and contractors will hold keys to these areas.

Shared areas

We will maintain estate lighting and pathways to reduce the risk of tripping. Please don't leave belongings where they can block shared areas or fire exits, or where there may be a danger to health and safety.

You should report any faulty fire doors, inside or outside your property on 0800 952 4444 as soon as possible.

Your tenancy agreement states you are also not allowed to use or store any:

- Liquid petroleum or paraffin containers or cylinders (for example, Calor gas)
- Dangerous chemicals, gases or materials
- Any other materials or gases that burn easily

9. Water safety

Legionnaires' disease is a kind of pneumonia. It is caused by bacteria in water and it can be transferred to people by breathing in droplets of water that contain the bacteria.

What we will do:

- Carry out yearly inspections of tenants' and residents' association halls and flush out any water tanks where appropriate
- Keep maintenance and water treatment records and make sure copies are available for inspecting officers
- Carry out risk assessments and adopt measures to prevent the disease
- Carry out regular inspections of all shared water tanks

What you should do:

The risk of Legionnaires' disease is very small; however you can do the following to keep the risk low:

- Visit your GP if you suspect you have contracted

Legionnaires' disease

- Regularly clean and disinfect any taps and shower heads in your home
- Make sure that you run any taps and showers to move any stagnant water when they have not been used for a while, for example, when you get home from holiday.

10. Health checks

Your health is important to us. If you're aged between 40 and 74 years and have not already been diagnosed with heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, or had a stroke, you will be invited for your check at some time over the coming years. Letters are sent out on a five yearly cycle. When you get your letter, call your GP to make an appointment.

Do I need to wait for a letter for a health check?

No. If you are a Southwark resident and/or are registered with a Southwark GP and you meet the above criteria, you can have an NHS health check at any time in any one of the following ways:

- Through your GP
- At one of our participating community pharmacies
- With our outreach team who work from shopping centres, libraries and other community venues across Southwark.

For further information, please visit www.southwark.gov.uk/healthcheck