

Fire Safety Guide for Tenants

We all have a role to play in keeping our homes and buildings safe. This guide outlines what we do as your landlord and how you can help us protect everyone.

What We Do

Expert contractors & fire services

Our Health & Safety team works alongside external fire safety professionals and local fire & rescue teams to carry out fire risk assessments. We act swiftly if any hazard is found, so that we comply with our legal obligations under the Fire Safety Order and Fire Safety Act 2021.

Smoke & heat alarms

We install smoke or heat alarms on every storey of your home, and in any room with a fuel-burning appliance. Alarms are checked to ensure they are in working order on the first day you move in and are maintained thereafter.

Fire-door inspections

In buildings taller than 11 metres in height we conduct annual checks on flat front doors and quarterly checks on communal fire doors to ensure all self-closers and seals work correctly, in compliance with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022. We also complete these checks in our smaller blocks to ensure everyone remains safe in the event of a fire.

Communal area checks

During routine block inspections we will check communal corridors, stairwells, and landings to ensure they remain clear of bikes, plant pots, rubbish or anything flammable, helping make evacuation routes safe.

What you can do to keep everyone safe

Report issues straightaway

If you notice any damage, alarms not working, fire door problems, or anything unsafe in your home or building, please contact us immediately on 01323 340018.

Test alarms regularly (at least weekly)

Press the test button. If it's on the ceiling, reach carefully (for example, using a broom handle). If the alarm does not sound during a weekly test, shows a fault indicator, has no power light, or begins to chirp or beep regularly, report it to us

immediately. Do not remove or tamper with the alarm - let us know, and we will replace it safely.

Don't disable or cover alarms. Never remove batteries to silence low-battery chirps; don't obstruct detectors with tape, paint, cloths or covers. If the alarm is faulty, report it immediately.

Balconies and Personal Items

No flammable storage: avoid keeping soft furniture, household goods, BBQs, or fencing/screens on your balcony.

BBQs are prohibited on balconies at all times - even when attended.

Lithium Batteries and E-transport Vehicles

Lithium-ion batteries, common in e-bikes, e-scooters and mobility scooters, have caused a sharp increase in home fires, especially when charging indoors. Therefore e-scooters or e-bikes are not permitted to be kept or stored in any BHT Sussex property.

Mobility scooters (medical use):

Always speak to your housing officer to agree a safe storage and charging plan.

Night-Time Safety Checks

Before bedtime, please:

- Close all internal doors (slows smoke spread).
- Switch off/unplug unnecessary appliances (except required always-on appliances like fridges/freezers).
- Confirm cooker/hobs are fully turned off.
- Avoid running washing machines, dishwashers, or other appliances overnight.
- Turn heaters off & use heat guards if available.
- Extinguish candles and cigarettes properly.

Don't leave phones, laptops or toys charging while you sleep.

Keep all exit paths clear and store keys and a torch in a readily accessible place.

Candles, Incense & Oil Burners

Never leave open flames unattended or burning overnight.

Use sturdy, flat fireproof holders on stable, level surfaces.

Keep them away from curtains, furniture, clothing or anything flammable.

Keep flames out of reach of children and pets, or switch to battery-operated LED alternatives.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Awareness

This gas is invisible and odourless yet can cause serious harm and even death.

Symptoms of CO exposure include headaches, dizziness, nausea, breathlessness, chest pain, and loss of consciousness.

Warning signs around appliances:

- Lazy yellow/orange gas flame (should be crisp blue).
- Black sooty marks around fires/boilers.
- Sudden condensation or pilot lights going out frequently.

If you suspect CO exposure:

- Open windows/doors to ventilate.
- Turn OFF the appliance (if safe).
- Leave the property immediately.
- Call 999 and ask for an ambulance. Inform them you suspect CO exposure.
- Contact Gas Emergency at 0800 111 999 and let us know right away.

Your GP or emergency department may arrange a CO breath/blood test.

Cooking Safety

The kitchen is the most common location for fires at home. To minimise risks:

- Always stay in the kitchen while cooking. If you must leave, turn off the hob or remove the pan from heat.
- Keep pot handles pointed inwards.
- Don't cook in loose clothing and keep towels or cloths away from heat.
- Regularly clean hobs, grills, ovens and extractors to reduce grease build-up.
- Never cook when you're drowsy, after drinking alcohol, or on medication that makes you sleepy.
- Toasters and other small appliances must be kept clear of cupboards and flammable items when in use.
- If a pan catches fire, do not use water. If safe to do so, turn off the heat and leave the room, closing the door behind you.

Electrical Equipment & Appliance Safety

Faulty electrical items result in thousands of home fires each year.

Buy appliances that carry the UKCA or CE safety marks.

Keep devices clean and dust/fluff-free—especially dryers, which must have lint cleaned regularly.

Always unplug straighteners and allow them to cool on a heat-resistant surface.

Do not overload sockets:

- Use one socket per high-powered appliance (e.g. fridge, kettle, iron).
- Use only one plug per socket. Do not daisy-chain adapters or use multi-plug power boards for heaters.

Use correct fuses (e.g. 3A for lamps/computers, 13A for kettles/toasters/dishwashers).

Unplug charging devices overnight and avoid charging on beds or sofas.

Escape Routes & Drills

Having a clear escape plan is vital. Know all possible exit routes from your flat - this includes secondary ways in case your usual path is blocked.

Stairwells are fitted with self-closing fire doors and are designed to help you escape.

Keep exit paths, corridors, and stairwells completely free of bikes, shoes, buggies or rubbish.

Test the route in daylight and do not forget to practise at night.

Keep door/window keys and a small torch in a known, accessible place.

If any part of your escape route is ever blocked or locked, report it immediately.

Evacuation & Fire Notices

Every building has a Fire Action Notice that explains the evacuation strategy for that building. This may be a full evacuation, temporary simultaneous evacuation, or stay-put strategy. Always follow the instructions displayed in your building and any directions given by the Fire and Rescue Service.

If you have mobility difficulties, sensory impairments, a cognitive condition, or any circumstance that may affect your ability to respond to a fire alarm or evacuate safely, please contact your Housing Officer so appropriate support arrangements can be considered.

Fire Doors: Why They Matter

Fire doors protect all residents and escape routes by keeping smoke and flames contained.

Flat entrance doors play a vital role in slowing the spread of fire and smoke. They must remain in good condition, close properly and provide suitable fire resistance appropriate to the building.

Do not tamper with self-closing mechanisms. If your front door doesn't close firmly, or is damaged, report it at once. Do not prop open communal fire doors - if you see one open, close it immediately.

We inspect flat front doors annually, and all communal fire doors every three months. Please let us know if inspections are missed or if you experience issues.

Heaters & Portable Heat Sources

Always secure free-standing heaters to a wall or use wall-mounted units. Never dry clothes on or near heaters.

Maintain at least 1 metre distance from curtains and furniture. Allow space heaters to cool fully before moving.

Avoid using paraffin, kerosene, or gas heaters indoors—they emit harmful fumes (including carbon monoxide) and significantly increase fire risk.

Smoking & Vaping Safely

Smoking (cigarettes, pipes, cigars) is still the most common cause of fire-related deaths.

Never smoke in bed or in a fatigued condition. Use an ashtray and run water over its contents before disposal. Don't rest lit cigarettes on sofas, armchairs or bedding. Do not dispose of cigarettes from balconies. Use a deep, stable ashtray and ensure cigarettes are fully extinguished before disposal.

Vapes: use only the official charger supplied and inspect for battery damage; don't leave charging batteries unattended or overnight.

Shared Service Cupboards

These cupboards house gas, water or electrical services and must remain locked. Please do not store personal items inside them.

If a cupboard door is damaged, unlocked, or blocked, report it immediately.

Keeping Communal Areas Clear

Never leave bikes, prams, shoes, plant pots, rubbish, or personal belongings in corridors or stairways. These cause serious fire hazards and block escape routes.

If you see clutter, please let us know so we can clear it. Report damaged fire doors, missing signage, faulty emergency lighting, blocked stairways, or any fire safety concern immediately.

If a Fire Breaks Out

Evacuate immediately using the nearest safe exit, following the building's Fire Action Notice.

Once you are safe, call 999 and ask for the Fire and Rescue Service. Never assume someone else has called 999. Give them the location and nature of the fire.

Once you are safe, call us on 01323 340018 and inform us you are leaving because of a fire.

Do not use lifts during a fire unless specifically instructed by the Fire and Rescue Service.

Wait at the assembly point until the Fire Brigade confirms it is safe to return.

If you are displaced, we (or your local council) can assist in finding temporary accommodation.

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 require landlords to provide residents with information regarding:

- how to report a fire
- evacuation strategy
- what residents should do in a fire

We will provide fire safety information when you move in and periodically thereafter. Please read and retain this information.

Final Thoughts

Fire safety is a team effort. Our role is to ensure buildings meet legal standards and fire safety systems are in place. Your role is to use them responsibly and report concerns promptly. The aim of this guide is to help you live safely, confidently, and comfortably in your home.