

Guidance for Tenants Fire Safety in Houses in Multiple Occupation

Common Causes of Fires

Each year about 600 people die and about 11,000 are injured in fires in their homes. Over a quarter of the deaths and over one third of the injuries occur in houses or flats in multiple occupation (HMOs). The six most common causes of accidental fires in HMOs are:

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Accidents during cooking - about 10,000 fires

Lack of care when smoking - about 3,000 fires

Defective electrical appliances - about 1,500 fires

Careless use or disposal of matches - about 1,250 fires

Careless use of heaters - about 900 fires

Smoke Alarms

Your home should have mains powered, interlinked, smoke detectors fitted in the circulation areas and, ideally, in the living areas and sleeping areas as well. The common escape route within an HMO should be protected by an automatic fire detection and alarm system if the building has more than three storeys. If the HMO in which you live is only one or two storeys then it is recommended that the common escape route is protected by at least a mains powered system comprising interlinked, self-contained smoke alarms. Advice on these matters can be obtained from your local fire brigade or the local office of the environmental health department. If your landlord has supplied and fitted smoke detectors you should report any faults or suspected defects to the landlord or building manager. Do not tamper with detectors.

Be Prepared for Fires

Make sure you are familiar with the escape routes from your home. If there is an alternative route make sure you know where it goes and always keep it clear. HMOs of up to six floors may only have one stairway. This is your lifeline in a fire and should be protected by self-closing fire doors separating it from the accommodation. This is to keep the fire out of the stairway long enough for you to escape.

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	Do	Don't
Cooking	Keep your cooker clean. Report faults to your landlord or manager	Throw water on a chippan fire. Leave a chippan unattended. Fill a chippan more than half full. Dry laundry on cookers or too close to possible sources of ignition.
Smoking		Smoke in bed. Leave unattended cigarettes/cigars in ashtrays. Use anything combustible as an ashtray. Throw cigarettes on the floor.
Matches		Discard matches that are not properly extinguished. Leave matches within reach of children.
Heaters	Use fixed installations or convector heaters	Cover heaters with combustible materials (clothes etc).
Electrical Appliances	Switch off and unplug faulty appliances Service electric blankets. Use appliances in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.	Leave electric blankets on when you go to bed. Leave unattended appliances switched on.
Wiring	Report faults to the landlord or manager. Have alterations carried out by a professional.	Use more than one adapter per socket. Use adapters for high powered appliances Overload power sockets. Pull a plug out by the flex. Run cables under rugs, carpets or doors. Use the wrong size fuse.

If a Fire Breaks out in your Home

- ◆ If you are in the room where the fire is, leave straight away, together with anybody else, then **close the door** .
- ◆ Do not stay behind to try to put the fire out.
- ◆ Tell everybody else in your home about the fire and get everybody to leave. Close the front door and leave the building .
- ◆ If there is a lift do not use it.

- ◆ Do not use a balcony unless it is part of the escape route from the building.

Call the Fire Brigade

Calling the Fire Brigade

The fire brigade should always be called to a fire, even if it only seems a small fire. This should be done straight away. The way to call the fire brigade is by telephone as follows:

1. Lift the receiver and dial 999.
2. When the operator answers give the telephone number you are ringing from and ask for FIRE.
3. When the fire brigade reply tell them clearly the address where the fire is.
4. Do not replace the receiver until the fire brigade have repeated the address to you and you are sure they have got it right. The fire brigade cannot help if they do not have the full address.

Landlords Responsibilities

The Housing Act 1985 section 352 requires that an HMO is 'fit' for the number of occupants. It is the landlord's responsibility to ensure that this is complied with. 'Fitness' includes adequate means of escape from fire and other fire precautions. 'Fire precautions' includes (depending on the size of the HMO) a fire detection and alarm system and fire fighting equipment. The Department of the Environment provide guidelines on these matters which are enforced by the Local Authority Private Sector Housing Team. The person managing the HMO (this may be a landlord or a representative) must also ensure that means of escape are kept clear and fitted with fire exists signs and that other fire precautions are maintained in good order. This should be carried out on a regular basis.

Tenants Responsibilities

Regulations also require that residents of HMOs comply with any reasonable arrangements made by the manager with regard to means of escape, fire precautions, storage and disposal of rubbish. Residents must not damage any equipment provided for these purposes.

Furniture and Furnishings

Since 1st January 1997 all upholstered furniture supplied in let accommodation must fully comply with the flammability requirements of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988. Furniture supplied by the tenant is not covered by the regulations, nor is furniture manufactured before 1950. The only other exception is if non-complying furniture was contained in accommodation which had been let with that furniture since before the 1st March 1993, and the tenant continued to let the property before the end of 1996, then that tenant may continue to be supplied with that same furniture until that tenant leaves. Upholstered furniture supplied to any subsequent tenant must comply when they start their tenancy.

In the interest of safety and good practice, we recommend that all non-compliant, upholstered furniture is replaced now

Produced by the Private Sector Housing Team

For Further Information Contact:

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Tel: 03003008000

◆ **This information can be provided in an alternative format or language on request call 03003008000**

- ◆ যদি অনুরোধ করেন তাহলে অন্য কোনও আকারে বা ভাষায় এই তথ্য আপনি পেতে পারেন। 03003008000 (Bengali)
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