

Fire safety: Independent living schemes

If you live in an independent living scheme apartment there are things you should know about how to prevent fires and what to do if fire breaks out. Please read this factsheet carefully and keep it handy.

Built-in safety features

Your independent living scheme has been designed and built with fire safety in mind.

- **Walls and fire doors:** Walls and doors between apartments, stairs and corridors are designed to resist fire and stop the spread of smoke. Doors along corridors are always held open. In the event of a fire alarm they will automatically close.
- **Lifts:** The lift is not available in emergency fire situations. In the event of a fire alarm activation, the lifts will automatically go to the ground floor and stay there with their doors open.
- **Fire alarm systems:** All independent living schemes have a fire alarm system, which can be operated manually by activating a break glass point, or automatically by detectors that sense heat and / or smoke. The fire alarm system is tested weekly by the Community Support Worker / Residential Scheme Manager. In addition, practice fire drills are carried out every six months. This will ensure you are aware of what to do in the event of a fire.
- **Fire extinguishers:** All independent living schemes have fire extinguishers located in the corridors. Please do not move or tamper with the fire extinguishers.
- **Emergency lighting:** In the event of an emergency the lighting may fail. All independent living schemes have an emergency lighting supply which will give enough lighting to allow for an emergency exit of the building.
- **Fire notices:** Fire notices are displayed in all independent living schemes which will give guidance on what to do in the case of an emergency and indicate where your nearest fire exit is located.

- Wet mist sprinkler system: If your scheme has a wet mist sprinkler system this will only activate on the detection of heat in the location where it is detected.

Don't block your escape route

- Remember, when you share a building with other people, your safety and theirs depends on everyone co-operating.
- In your own home, do not block your hall or put portable heaters or anything that catches fire easily there. It is the only escape route for you and your family and visitors.
- We have a zero tolerance approach to fire safety in all communal areas to make them as safe as possible. Do not place any personal items, including mobility scooters, into common areas. This includes bin rooms, meter cupboards or stairways. We have a responsibility to ensure these areas are free of combustible materials.

What to do if fire breaks out in your apartment

1. Alert any other people in the apartment.
2. Leave the room at once, and close all windows and the door behind you. Make sure you close the entrance door to your apartment as you leave. Don't tackle the fire yourself, unless you are sure it is safe to do so.
3. Don't use balconies which are not part of an escape route.
4. Call the fire service by dialing 999 on the nearest phone. This is a free service, even from your mobile. You won't need to pay money if you have to use a call box.
5. When leaving the building, use the staircase, not the lift.
6. Leave the building and wait for the fire service at a safe distance from the building, you can then advise them where the fire is in your block.

If you discover a fire

1. Move away from the fire to a safe location behind a closed door.
2. Activate the alarm at a fire point by breaking the glass and then ring 999.
3. Do not attempt to fight the fire, leave it alone.

If you hear the fire alarm

- If you are in your apartment stay there with the door closed until it is no longer safe to do so. These doors are fire resistant and will protect you if they are kept closed.
- If you are in a lounge or other shared area, stay there with the doors closed.
- If you are in a corridor and the fire doors are closed stay there.
- Do not leave the building unless you are told to do so, stay in a safe area away from the fire.
- Never re-enter the building until you have been authorised to do so and the building is deemed to be safe.
- If you do have to leave the building, make sure you go to the assembly point signposted so you are in a safe place away from the fire.

How to prevent fires

We encourage all independent living tenants to adhere to good housekeeping to reduce or eliminate any risk of fire.

- Don't smoke in bed. This is a major cause of fires in the home. Always finish your cigarette before going to bed, and make sure that they are stubbed out properly.
- Never leave candles unattended. Candles are naked flames, make sure you put candles and incense sticks right out at night.
- Chip pans are another major source of fires in the home. Do not fill them more than a third full of fat. Never leave the pan without turning off the heat. If the pan does catch fire, turn off the heat, if safe to do so. Do not throw water on it or put wet towels over the pan. Turn off the heat and leave for at least half an hour. Avoid the use of chip pans if you can. If yours and the safety of others is at risk, leave the apartment and close doors and windows as you leave, then activate the alarm at a fire point by breaking the glass and ring 999.
- Before going to bed, switch off all electrical appliances, except those which are designed to be left on such as DVD recorders. Carefully remove plugs from electrical sockets. Check ashtrays for burning cigarette ends and pipes. Close all internal doors. Check there is nothing blocking the hallway or front door.

- If you have a mobility scooter this must be PAT tested on an annual basis. It must be stored in the scooter store or inside your apartment. Under no circumstances must mobility scooters be stored in communal areas.
- Do not place hot or burning items into rubbish bins.
- Do not place any large items of furniture or rubbish outside your apartment or outside any bin stores. Removal of large or bulky items can be arranged through the local authority refuse collection service.
- Do not prop or wedge open your apartment door. This must be kept closed at all times to prevent the spread of fire.
- Do not tamper with or remove any door closers, apartment doors or internal doors within your apartment.
- Do not tamper with or damage any sprinkler heads within your apartment.

What if fire breaks out elsewhere in the building?

- It will normally be safe for you to stay in your own apartment. If your apartment is affected by heat or smoke from elsewhere in the block, leave at once, closing all windows and doors behind you.
- Keep low to the floor as there will be less smoke and visibility will be better.
- If you are unable to leave your apartment due to smoke in the corridors, you should block the bottom and surround of your door with wet cloths, move to a window furthest away from the door and try to raise the alarm.

If you see anything of concern to you in your independent living scheme please report this to your Community Support Worker or Residential Scheme Manager immediately or call us on 0345 8 507 507.

If you would like a free Home Fire Safety Check please speak to your Community Support Worker or Residential Scheme Manager.

Remember your actions can affect the safety of others in the building. Please follow the advice and instructions in this factsheet. If you have any concerns or would like more information, phone us on 0345 8 507 507.



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