

# Fire safety – high rise living

Fire safety is your responsibility

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## Contents

Introduction.....	2
What to do if there's a fire.....	2
Smoke alarms .....	2
Gas safety and gas servicing in high rise .....	3
Electrical safety and how to prevent electrical fires .....	3
Preventing fires in your flat.....	4
Make a bedtime check .....	4
Cooking safely .....	4
Preventing fires in communal areas .....	5
Oxygen .....	5
Mobility scooters.....	5
Smoking .....	5
Plan your escape route .....	6
Useful contacts.....	6

## Introduction

The chance of a fire happening in a high rise block is no greater than in any other type of housing, but if a fire does happen you do need to know what to do.

Fire safety is important in high rise buildings as a fire in any area of the block will impact on a lot of other residents. This leaflet is designed to:

- help you think about how to minimise the chance of fire happening in your home
- tell you what you need to do if a fire happens in your home
- tell you what to do if a fire happens in another part of the block
- encourage you to take pride in where you live and report any antisocial behaviour

This leaflet was written with the help of [Bedfordshire Fire Service](#).

## What to do if there's a fire

### In your flat (or that of a neighbour)

- Leave your flat calmly with everyone else who is there
- Do not collect valuables - leave everything behind
- Close all doors
- Do not use the lift
- Use the stairs
- Get out of the building and stay out
- Call 999 – don't assume someone else has

### Elsewhere in the block

- Close the doors in your flat and in the communal areas
- Place damp towels or cloths and tape around the door if you smell smoke
- Stay in your home unless advised by the Fire Service
- Call 999 – don't assume someone else has

## Smoke alarms

Not having a working smoke alarm doubles your risk of dying in a fire.

Your flat will have a smoke alarm fitted by Luton Council. These are checked once a year when you have your gas safety check or by any electrical contractor working in your home.

All our fitted smoke alarms are hard-wired in to the main electrical supply with a back-up battery. They are **not** linked to the emergency services and so if you think there is a fire you must always **call 999**.

Check your smoke alarm once a week by pressing the test button on it.

If you have a Telecare system fitted in your property, your smoke alarm will go through to the emergency alarm centre. Please do also **call 999** if you think there is a fire.

If there is a problem with your smoke alarm please report this straight away to Building and Technical Services (BTS) by calling **08000 147 333**.

If the smoke alarm intermittently beeps, the battery is low. Please call BTS Repairs to arrange for a new battery installation.

Vacuum or wipe down your smoke alarm every 6 months to make sure that the sensor is clear.

## Gas safety and gas servicing in high rise

If you smell gas:

- open all the windows
- do not turn on any electrical appliances or lights
- leave the property and call the National Grid to report the gas leak on **0800 111 999**

If you have gas central heating in your flat, Luton Council will need access to this to carry out the annual gas safety check.

This is to make sure that any gas appliances installed by us are safe. If gas appliances are faulty this can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning which can kill.

BTS will notify you when your gas servicing is due with details of who the contractor is and an appointment date and time.

If this appointment is not convenient we're happy to change it. Appointments are available Monday to Friday, from 8am to 8pm and on from 8am to 12 noon on Saturdays.

The gas service includes a test to make sure that your smoke alarm is working.

Gas servicing is a legal requirement and is to protect you and your neighbours. If you do not allow access to do this then we'll take legal action against you.

## Electrical safety and how to prevent electrical fires

Do not ever use water on an electrical fire. Always turn off the electricity supply and get out of your flat immediately.

Do not leave your washing machine on overnight or when you are out as they are very flammable.

If you have a tumble dryer:

- do not leave it on when you are out of the property
- make sure that you clean the lint out of it after every load
- never cover the vent or any other opening
- make sure you only use a vent pipe designed for the machine and that there are no kinks

Check all kitchen appliances regularly for wear and tear.

If you are not using your cooker turn it off.

Only use a deep fat fryer that is thermostatically controlled.

Do not leave hand-held electrical appliances such as curling tongs, hair straighteners or hair dryers plugged in after use.

Do not overload electrical sockets and avoid using extension leads.

Unplug unused items overnight and do not leave them on standby – this will also reduce your electricity bill.

Do not make any alterations to the electrics in your home without our permission. Only qualified electricians are allowed to carry out electrical works. We'll need to see certification for such work.

If you have problems with your electrics, such as fuses blowing, please call BTS immediately on **08000 147333**.

## Preventing fires in your flat

Never leave unattended candles burning.

Flammable liquids such as petrol or paraffin must not be stored in your home or on your balcony.

Never set off fireworks or throw them from your balcony.

Never throw any lit cigarette or any other naked flame from your balcony.

Never light a barbecue on your balcony or in your home.

Do not store items on your balcony – they can be a fire risk.

Make sure any pigeon netting is kept free from debris.

## Make a bedtime check

You are more at risk from a fire when asleep. It is a good idea to check your home before you go to bed.

- Close inside doors at night to prevent a fire from spreading
- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on – like your fridge or freezer
- Check your cooker is turned off
- Don't leave the washing machine on
- Don't leave any items, such as mobile phones on charge overnight
- Put candles and cigarettes out properly
- Make sure exits are kept clear
- Keep window and door keys where everyone can find them

## Cooking safely

Over half of all accidental fires in the home start in the kitchen. Take particular care when cooking and don't get distracted. Turn pans off or down if called away from the kitchen.

- Avoid leaving children alone in the kitchen when cooking
- Don't cook when under the influence of alcohol
- Make sure saucepan handles don't stick out
- Keep cooker and grill pan clean and free from grease
- Keep tea towels and other flammable items away from the cooker and hob
- Double check the cooker is off when you finish cooking
- Use a thermostatically controlled electric fat fryer instead of a chip pan

## Preventing fires in communal areas

The communal areas in high rise blocks must be kept clear of any items that may cause a fire. Please follow this advice to keep them safe:

- Always keep landings, stairwells and corridors clear
- Communal areas must never be used to store items such as bicycles, pushchairs and prams, scooters etc
- Rubbish must be put down the rubbish chute and not left in communal areas or the chute rooms
- Electrical or gas meter cupboards must be kept locked shut and have nothing stored in them
- Always close doors in communal areas as these are fire doors which are designed to prevent a fire from spreading
- Never smoke in the communal areas – this is against the law
- Make sure that any debris or rubbish is removed from the netting around your balcony
- Always report to your housing officer if you see anybody leaving burn marks on walls, windows or fixtures and fittings, or using a naked flame in a communal area
- Always allow access to BTS for them to carry out fire safety works

## Oxygen

If you have to use oxygen to help with your breathing please follow these guidelines.

- Do not go near any naked flames such as candles, or other heat sources, whilst you are using oxygen – you must keep it at least 2 metres, or 6 ft away.
- Always store oxygen cylinders upright.

## Mobility scooters

Mobility scooters are extremely flammable. If you have, or are intending to get one, please let your housing officer know as there may be storage difficulties within your flat.

If you have a mobility scooter please note:

- scooters must never be stored in communal areas, but must always be stored in the flat
- batteries must be recharged safely and not left unattended when they're charging
- only electric scooters are allowed in council blocks
- service the scooter regularly
- we strongly recommend you get insurance for your scooter

## Smoking

Cigarettes, roll ups and cigars cause more deaths by fire than anything else. You can help prevent this by:

- never smoking in bed
- using a proper heavy ashtray that won't tip over easily
- making sure that all contents of the ashtray are fully out before tipping them into a bin
- never leaving lit cigarettes, roll ups or cigars unattended

If you use electronic cigarettes please do consider the following safety advice:

- always follow the manufacturer's advice on safe charging, use and disposal
- keep the device away from flammable materials when it's charging including near to bedding or soft furnishings
- charge it on a flat stable surface such as a table away from cluttered spaces
- don't leave the device unattended or over the recommended charging time - there have been cases when electronic cigarettes have exploded

## Plan your escape route

Plan your escape in the event of a fire and make sure that any people who live with you know what it is. This could save your life.

- Keep all exits clear – in both your flat and communal areas
- Make sure that you know where all the fire exits and alarms are
- Keep door and window keys where you can find them easily
- Count how many doors you will need to go through to escape. You need to do this as you may not be able to see if there is a lot of smoke, and you may become confused about where you are
- Always keep fire doors in your flat closed. These slow down the spread of any fire and give you longer to escape.

## Useful contacts

- Bedfordshire Fire Emergency **999**
- BTS **0800 147333**
- Gas leaks **0800 111999**
- Electrical emergencies **0800 147333**
- Report crime **101**
- Police non-emergency **101**
- Police emergency **999**
- Housing management **01582 547304**