

Fire Safety

for landlords & homeowners

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Fire risk assessment for landlords and homeowners

Any 'responsible person' can carry out a fire risk assessment, although some local authorities will do this for you. Some of the risks an assessment should consider include:

- What fire hazards exist?
- What risks are there to the occupants and their visitors?
- What can be done to mitigate and control these risks?
- What is the likelihood of a fire?
- How likely is it that a fire would go undetected and be allowed to spread?
- How can you reduce the probability of a fire?
- How can you limit the effects of a fire, should one occur?
- In case of fire, would occupants be alerted?
- Can occupants escape safely? Is the escape route free from clutter?
- Are heaters or cookers appropriately sited and in good working order?

- Is the heating adequate? If not, tenants may be tempted to use their own heaters, increasing the risk of fire?
- Are there sufficient facilities for drying clothes? If not, tenants may be tempted to dry clothes on heaters, which represents a fire risk.
- Are there sufficient and appropriately sited electrical sockets?
- Is the electrical installation in good order?
- Is there a working residual current device (RCD) to provide some protection against electrical fires?
- Are suitable guards provided for open or solid fuel fires?
- Are the furnishings combustible?
- Is there any disrepair to walls, eg pipes going from one room to another, which could allow fire, smoke and fumes to spread?

- Are fire doors fitted where necessary? If so, are they well fitted and do they close automatically?
- Do you need to provide fire-fighting equipment? Is this in good working order and do the tenants know how to operate it?
- Any safety measures you introduce should satisfy both the local authority and the fire authority.
- The risk assessment should be regularly reviewed.



For more detailed risk assessments for different styles of property, download the Homestamp Consortium's guide



More tips on making your property safer can be found at fireservice.co.uk

Appliance safety

The most common reason for accidental fires in the home is misuse of appliances, with 10,197 fires being caused in this way in 2015-16. The majority of these (9,378) were caused by misuse of cooking equipment. Faulty appliances and leads caused a further 4,328 fires.

Fridge safety

 Whatever make or model your fridge, if it has external coils, these should be kept clear of dust as a build-up can present a fire risk.

 When manoeuvring the fridge – eg during installation or to allow access to vacuum the coils – take care to avoid trapping or rolling over the cable, as this could damage it, exposing the wires and presenting another fire risk.



Find more fridge advice from Electrical Safety First here

Simple fire prevention tips

-  Ensure your home has a Residual Current Device (RCD)
-  Don't overload sockets
-  Don't buy cheap unbranded chargers
-  Maintain appliances, eg check cables regularly, clean out tumble dryer fluff filters, empty toaster of crumbs
-  Keep flammables away from heat sources
-  Avoid running appliances while you are out

Register your appliances

As many fires are caused by electrical appliances, it is always worth registering new appliances with the manufacturer so that they can inform you if a safety issue becomes apparent. Please check if there are any known problems with your existing appliances, it only takes minutes:



Electrical Safety First's product recall checker

Electrical Safety First
The UK's electrical safety experts

Fire safety advice for all landlords

Sadly, people who live in rented accommodation, both private and social, are **more likely to experience a fire in their home**, according to the English Housing Survey: Fire and Fire Safety 2013-14. As a landlord, you have a duty to keep your tenants safe so we have compiled this guide, with the help of the **National Landlords Association**, to ensure you can do everything you can to minimise the risk of fire.

Minimum legal requirements for ALL rented properties

Alarms and fire-fighting equipment

- ➔ You must have at least one smoke alarm on every storey of a rental property used as living accommodation, ideally hard wired in with a 10-year lithium battery back-up.
- ➔ You must supply a carbon monoxide alarm in any room used as living accommodation where solid fuel is used.
- ➔ Both types of alarm must be tested and confirmed working at the start of each tenancy – after that, they are the tenant's responsibility. Follow the manufacturer's instructions when fitting, or

have the alarms installed by a qualified tradesperson who offers a warranty that continues if they are no longer in business.

- ➔ Depending on its size, the property may require fire-fighting equipment (fire extinguishers and/or blankets) for small fires in their early stages although the **best advice is to evacuate and dial 999**. Tenants must be thoroughly briefed on the system and it is worth providing evidence this has been done.
- ➔ Larger properties may also require fire doors – ensure these are correctly fitted or they won't provide adequate protection.



Escape

- ➔ All rental properties must have adequate means of escape, ie clear of clutter and, for larger buildings and HMOs, with emergency lighting. Local fire services, such as **Devon and Somerset**, often have a checklist you can use.

The above laws may be designed for landlords, but are advisable for all homeowners to keep you and your family safe

Minimum legal requirements for ALL rented properties cont...

Gas safety

➔ An annual gas safety check must be carried out on each gas appliance and flue by a Gas Safe-registered engineer.

➔ To avoid rogue traders, always ensure your chosen engineer is listed on the Gas Safe Register site. A record of the check must be provided to the tenant within 28 days, and to new tenants at the start of their tenancy. If this is not given, you can be prosecuted.

➔ Gas pipework and flues must be maintained in a safe condition, as defined by a Gas Safe-registered engineer.

 **More advice on how to prevent fires in the home**

Electrics

➔ Electrical installation should be safe when tenants move in and be maintained in a safe condition. This should be supported by an EICR with an overall

'satisfactory condition'. Basic safety checks should be carried out by tenants and landlords.

 **Find more advice at [homesafetyguidance.co.uk](https://www.homesafetyguidance.co.uk)**

➔ Appliances provided by the landlord must be safe and at least have the CE marking, showing they comply with EU law. New appliances will be included in an Equipment Log to include any landlord's equipment which has been PAT tested.

In Scotland, five-yearly electrical installation checks are required. Wales and Northern Ireland are committed to following suit. Details of how similar requirements will be introduced in England's PRS have yet to be announced, though the amendment – sponsored by **Electrical Safety First** – was included in England's Housing and Planning Act, which gained Royal Assent in May 2016.

 **Read LACORS safety guidance**

Fire risk assessment

A fire risk assessment must be carried out on all rental properties; depending on your location, the local authority may do this for you.



Return to fire risk assessment checklist for landlords and homeowners 

The above laws may be designed for landlords, but are advisable for all homeowners to keep you and your family safe

Recommendations for landlords: these are not required by law but strongly advised

Electrics

➔ There is not yet a legal requirement for regular electrical testing in England, Wales and Northern Ireland but you are advised to have an electrical installation inspection by a skilled electrician registered with a Competent Person Scheme before each tenancy and at least every five years. This is a legal requirement for HMOs.

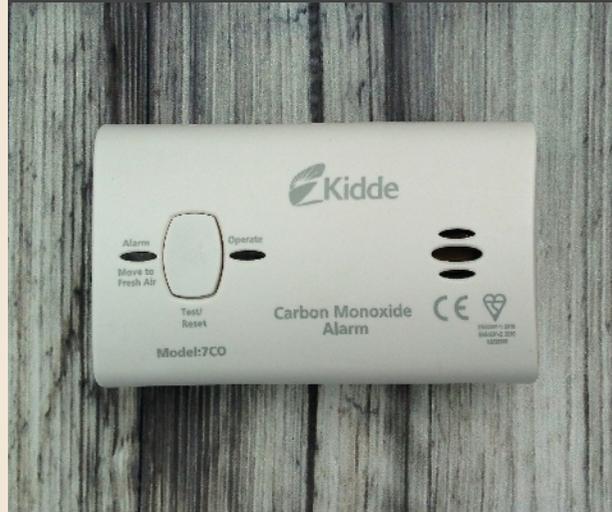
 **Download helpful documents from [homesafetyguidance.co.uk](https://www.homesafetyguidance.co.uk)**

➔ Residual Current Device (RCD) protection is recommended for all properties, so that electricity is automatically switched off if a fault occurs, guarding against electric shocks. This is especially important on the ground floor where sockets can be used to power electricity in gardens.

➔ Electrical work is not a DIY job: any work in any property is best carried out by a registered electrician.

 **Find advice on hiring reliable tradespeople** 

Alarms



➔ Even if there are no solid fuel appliances, we recommend you install carbon monoxide alarms wherever gas appliances are fitted, both in rental properties and your own home.

 **How to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning**

➔ You are recommended to display clear signs informing tenants of what to do and how to escape safely in a fire.

Do you run an HMO?

There are additional rules and regulations for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

What is an HMO?

- ➔ At least three people
- ➔ More than household
- ➔ Tenants share facilities such as bathroom and kitchen
- ➔ **Jump to information about Houses in Multiple Occupation**



The above recommendations are for landlords, but are strongly advised both for landlords and homeowners

Additional laws for Houses in Multiple Occupation

Fire risk assessment

➔ A fire risk assessment must be carried out on all HMOs, looking at each individual dwelling/room and communal area. Ideally, this should be carried out by a suitably qualified professional, although you can do it yourself if you feel able.

 **Government advice on assessing communal areas**

 **Homestamp Consortium's guide to fire protection in multi-occupied residences**

Fire alarms & fire-fighting equipment

➔ You must install smoke alarms on each storey where there is living accommodation, as well as one in each individual 'unit' (ie bedroom or bedsit).

➔ Licensed HMOs should have a mains alarm system. It is essential this is not powered by any electricity which would come from a prepayment meter.

➔ A heat alarm must be installed in high fire-risk rooms, such as kitchens.

➔ Kitchens and other high fire-risk rooms must be equipped with at least one fire blanket and fire extinguisher. Licensed HMOs require a fire extinguisher on each floor, checked regularly.

➔ Alarms must be kept in proper working order and you must be prepared to provide evidence of the regular checking/servicing of fire alarms to the local authority on request.

Escape routes

➔ Means of escape should be obvious and clear of obstruction. In licensed HMOs, fire exit notices should be put up and escape routes clearly shown.

Gas safety

➔ Landlords must have a gas safety check carried out every year and secure a Gas Safety Certificate, a copy of which must be provided to the tenant. The local authority can request to see this at any time and landlord of licensed HMOs must send a copy to them on an annual basis.

Electrical safety

➔ A full electrical inspection (EICR) must be carried out at least once every five years.

Furniture & furnishings

➔ Furniture and furnishings provided must comply with the **Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations** and display a label to confirm this.

Additional safety requirements

Local authorities may impose additional fire requirements, so check with the housing department of **the relevant council**.

Your local fire service should be happy for a Fire Safety Officer to visit your property and give advice.

In Scotland, any alarms installed or replaced after **September 2007** must be mains powered. **More guidance for renting in Scotland here.**

Recommendations for Houses in Multiple Occupation

The following are not required by law but are highly recommended for all HMOs.

Electrical appliances

➔ If electrical appliances are provided, the Electrical Safety Council's Guidance is that they should have a portable appliance test (PAT) at regular intervals;

- every two years for smaller appliances (such as kettles, lamps and vacuum cleaners)
- every four years for larger appliances (such as fridges and washing machines), boilers, fixed electrical heating and overnight storage units)

Fire-fighting equipment

Tenants should be trained in fire extinguisher use and advised only to tackle very small blazes they are confident of extinguishing.



The best advice is to evacuate and call the fire brigade

Fire safety signage

➔ Display signs detailing the procedure in the event of a fire.

 **Example of a fire safety notice from Bedford Borough Council**

➔ In case your tenants don't speak English, fire safety signs should have images and clearly identified exit routes.

➔ Fire exit signs should be clear, illuminated if necessary, and feature symbols which can be understood by anyone.

Other

➔ Write to each resident individually to inform them of fire safety measures in place.

➔ Consider a non-smoking policy indoors and provide a covered smoking area outside, away from the building.

