

EALING FIRE SAFETY POLICY **for** **COUNCIL HOUSING**

2015

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Introduction

Ealing Council (EC) takes its responsibility to ensure fire safety in social housing very seriously and will strive to reduce the risk of fire to as low a level as is reasonably possible. This document sets out the guiding principles with regard to fire safety and fire risk management.

Legislative and Regulatory Context

There is a significant raft of legislation and regulation around the prevention of fire in residential buildings that has developed over the years mainly in response to various incidents and tragedies that have occurred. This list included relates to Fire Precautions but is not an exhaustive:-

- a) b) The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which came into force in October 2006.
- b) The Housing Act 2004, which introduces the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- c) Building Regulations 2010: Part B: Fire Safety
- d) Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- e) Electrical Equipment (Safety and Use) Regulations 1994
- f) Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1998
- g) The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, particularly Section 3: - General duties of Employers and Self-employed persons other than their employees.

Approved Codes of Practices: -

- a) Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Sleeping Accommodation
- b) Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Small and Medium Places of Assembly

Guidance Notes:

- a) Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Guidance Note No. 1: Enforcement
Chief Fire Officers Association
- b) Collected Perceived Insights into and Application of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 for the Benefit of Enforcing Authorities. Chief Fire Officers Association
- c) National Fire Safety Protocol. LACORS
- d) Fire Safety in Purpose-built Blocks of Flats. Communities and Local

Government.

e) Fire Safety in Housing. Chartered Institute of Housing

Locally, this strategy complements the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and Fire Safety Arrangements produced by Ealing Council.

Policy Statement

In order to minimise the risk of fire in our residential properties we will:

- Undertake a fire risk assessment and inspection regime that is compliant with Current legislation, relevant industry standards and best practice
- Maintain passive fire precautions (alarms and detectors) effectively
- Require contractors to replace ALL fire stopping on completion of works
- Ensure that contractors, especially those carrying out 'hot works', are managed and supervised to prevent inadvertent or unexpected breaches of fire safety or increased risk of fire by their activities
- Keep sources of ignition and sources of fuel separated
- Inform and liaise with tenants to ensure fire risk is minimised
- Liaise with the London Fire Brigade (LFB) to ensure best use of available resources and promote fire awareness
- When fires occur, investigate the causes, identify lessons learnt and take action to remedy deficiencies found by the investigation.

Strategic Priorities

1. Ensuring that all staff are fully aware of their role in minimising and preventing the risk of fire.
2. Maintaining robust fire risk assessments and action plans on all housing property
3. Ensure all housing property is maintained to best practice standards to minimise the risk of fire
4. Ensuring that residents are fully aware of their responsibilities under the tenancy agreement or lease, and how they can access fire safety advice.
5. Engage with the LFB and other emergency services in respect of fire prevention

Roles and Responsibilities

Ensuring that all Council housing staff are fully aware of their role in minimising and preventing the risk of fire.

Director of Safer Communities

The Director of Safer Communities has overall responsibility for this fire safety in social housing. This includes the actions of contractors acting on behalf of LBE. The Director of Safer Communities is required to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to managing fire risk, including:

- Maintaining an up to date property register
- Ensuring adequate processes and procedures are in place to manage fire risk
- Ensuring suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training is carried out for staff and contractors
- Monitoring the performance of staff and contractors
- Ensuring that members of the public, staff and contractors are not unnecessarily exposed to fire risk

Senior Managers

The Senior Management Team will assist and deputise for the Director of Safer Communities and are responsible for the overall effectiveness of the fire precautions policy in their areas of responsibility. They are required to:

- Ensure adequate resources are allocated to manage fire risk
- Monitor the performance of their subordinates against the policy
- Advise the Director of Safer Communities of any problem arising in connection with the management of fire risk

Asset Planning Manager

The Asset Planning Manager will be responsible for the strategic management of fire precautions under the responsibility of the London Borough of Ealing, reporting directly to the Director of Safer Communities and shall:

- Formulate and revise the Council's Fire Safety Policy and Action Plan,
- Conduct audits to ensure that the provisions within the Fire Safety Policy are being enforced to the standard required
- Ensure suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training is carried out for staff and contractors
- Ensure that the fire precautions are maintained effectively,
- Investigate fires and fire near miss incidents and introduce controls to reduce the risk of such incidents recurring, to reduce financial loss and to improve fire risk precautions
- In the event of a fire which results in serious injury or death the Asset Planning Manager will prepare a report in liaison with others and ensure that it is made available to other relevant teams

Managers

Managers are responsible for the detailed arrangements necessary to manage fire risk within their areas of control. Where contractors are being managed and there is likelihood that fire precautions may be affected, regular monitoring is to be included to ensure these precautions are maintained. All managers are to ensure that:

- Adequate resources are made available to manage fire risk in multi-storey buildings
- All employees receive adequate information, instruction and training, including the provision of regular refresher training to maintain knowledge and skills
- they monitor the performance of their subordinates against the policy

Employees

All Employees of LBE, irrespective of their position, have a responsibility to:

- Take reasonable care for their own Health and Safety and that of other persons who may be adversely affected by active and/or passive fire precautions, including members of the public, tenants, visitors and contractors,
- Co-operate with LBE and its managers to enable compliance with this policy and the legal duties it holds,
- Diligently undertake fire safety works or repairs to ensure that the desired standard of fire precautions are maintained,
- Remove or reduce hazards that, in their opinion, may present a serious risk to health of themselves or others.
- Report hazards that have been removed or that may present a serious risk of fire.

Training

All staff that are involved in any way with fire risk assessment or fire prevention actions are to be trained to a suitable standard as determined by LBE's Senior Management Team and Corporate Health and Safety.

All staff are to complete fire safety awareness training which will be refreshed annually. The training is to include:

- Requirements of fire
- Causes of fire
- Hazards presented from fire
- Types of fuel
- Sources of ignition
- Fire detection
- Fire fighting equipment
- Means of escape
- Emergency procedure (specific arrangements for the office/location)

Staff with specific duties, such as Fire Wardens and Fire Risk Assessors, will be trained to undertake these tasks effectively and competently. LBE will provide short courses to enhance fire awareness and risk to appropriate visiting officers.

Contractors

This policy is to be read in conjunction with LBE's Code of Conduct for Contractors. Contractors are required to report any fire risk concerns to the respective LBE Contract Manager.

H & S Fire Safety Compliance – This will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Director of Safer Communities together with the Asset Planning Manager, Head of Asset Management, Head of Operations and the Head of Responsive Repairs and Maintenance.

Risk Assessment Schedule

Maintaining robust fire risk assessments and action plans on all housing property

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY
High Rise > 5 storeys	Annual
Low/Medium Rise 2 to 5 storeys	3 Yearly
Sheltered	Annual
Hostels	Annual
Halls/Community Centres	3 Yearly

The Risk Assessment Schedule varies in terms of building types and for this purpose, the following definitions apply:

- High Rise encompasses any building with more than five floors with distinct flats where tenants can live without the need for sharing facilities.
- Low/medium rise building encompasses any building with between two and five floors with distinct flats where tenants can live without the need for sharing facilities.

In high rise buildings, all communal areas will have a fire risk assessment completed within a rolling 12 month period by a competent person. This risk assessment should identify and evaluate sources of ignition, sources of fuel, passive fire protection measures, and the social environment.

In low/medium rise buildings, all communal areas will have a fire risk assessment completed within a rolling 3 year period by a competent person. This risk assessment should identify and evaluate sources of ignition, sources of fuel, passive fire protection measures, and the social environment.

Communal facilities include common rooms that may be used by all or a group of tenants. Examples include lounges, kitchen facilities and laundries. Communal facilities will be inspected with a frequency commensurate with risks identified in the Fire Risk Assessment.

All risk assessments will be carried out by competent persons.

Risk assessments will then be reviewed:

- In accordance with the frequency table
- Following a fire
- Following a fire Near Miss
- Following the introduction of a significant risk (e.g. persons with behavioural issues, disabilities etc)
- Following the introduction of new work practices
- Following any works affecting the means of escape or alarm systems
- As deemed necessary by the Asset Planning Manager

Where there is a significant change in use of the building or part of the building, LFB will be notified by LBE's Asset Planning Manager and the risk assessment revised without undue delay.

Where a flat is significantly redesigned by LBE, fire modelling will be carried out by a competent person to identify any additional fire risk introduced as part of the redesign.

The Asset Planning Manager, Head of Operations and a representative from Corporate Health and Safety will work collaboratively to ensure the best solution is achieved.

Fire Fighting Equipment & Passive Fire protection

Ensure all housing property is maintained to best practice standards to minimise the risk of fire

Dry Risers are installed in all high rise buildings. These will be inspected regularly and in accordance with the risk rating of the individual building to ensure that they remain in good working order at all times. In addition, an independent inspection will be carried out of the dry riser and fire hydrants according to the relevant standard.

For all other residential buildings, fire-fighting equipment will only be supplied in high risk areas, such as the lift motor rooms and electrical distribution rooms. These will be maintained according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Alarm Systems

Where an alarm system is installed, it shall be maintained according to the manufacturer's recommendations. In addition, a weekly check shall be carried out by the nominated contractor in such a way as to test every call point and sounder on a regular basis. Sounders are to be selected to provide an alarm giving a sound level between 60dB and 65dB. Alarm systems are to be monitored 24 hours a day to ensure a response from the emergency services and reduce false alarms out of normal office hours.

Heat and Smoke Alarms

Heat and Smoke detectors will be fitted and hardwired in a suitable place in every property. This will normally be the hallway for the smoke alarm and the kitchen for

the heat alarm. Where additional risks are identified, additional smoke detectors should be fitted to mitigate this risk. Where a deficiency is identified, a 10 year battery operated smoke detector will be installed and upgraded within the battery lifetime.

Testing of Services

Gas

Gas appliances will be serviced and inspected annually. A landlord safety certificate will be obtained for every property.

Electricity

Void properties will not be rented out unless an electrical safety certificate is provided by LBE's electrical contractor. This will ensure the distribution box and circuits are all up to the minimum standard required at the time of rental. In addition, all redundant wiring will be removed wherever reasonably possible. Communal electrical installations will be inspected and tested every 5 years.

Maintenance

The maintenance of passive fire protective measures are key in reducing the risk of fire and mitigating the effects of a fire should one break out. In order to correctly prioritise resources, fire safety repair categories have been introduced:

FIRE SAFETY WORKS IN COMMUNAL AREAS

Means of Escape

Communal doors and associated screens in landings and staircases are to be a minimum 30 minutes fire resisting and to be self closing. They are to have intumescent strips and include cold smoke seals. Any glass in doors or screens is to be fire resisting to the same duration as the door or screen containing it. Communal doors are to be inspected on a regular basis in lines with an assessment of risk for the individual building.

As these doors are heavily used any damage to them or propping open which compromises the integrity of the door to resist fire is to be reported immediately to the Asset Planning Manager for corrective action to be taken.

Doors to riser cupboards and Storerooms.

Doors and frames are to provide at least 30 minutes fire resistance and must be kept locked shut. The lock is to be accessible to the fire brigade. Where inappropriate items are stored, staff are to make reasonable efforts to discover the owners and request removal. If not removed within a reasonable period (7 days for verbal contact, 21 days if in writing), then these items are to be removed and disposed of.

Decorations:

Only paints and materials to the Class O for fire protection are to be used in means of escape. Any redecoration of walls and ceilings must be with the same paint system.

Common Ducts

Common kitchen or bathroom extraction ducts will be suitably protected to ensure the spread of fire via these ducts is minimised. This may take the form of fire resisting baffles within the duct or intumescent grilles fitted to extraction fans.

The provision of refuse chutes in high rise buildings may also allow a rapid vertical spread of fire. Bin rooms will be fitted with smoke detectors and sprinklers to quickly suppress a fire within the refuse present. Smoke detectors will be fitted to the head of the refuse chute with a fire suppression device to reduce the risk of fire spread. In addition, the refuse chute hoppers will be fire resisting and fit correctly with a good seal in the chute aperture.

Fire Doors

Individual flat front entrance doors provide a key line of defence in fire safety as they form a compartment between the flat and the communal means of escape for other residents of the building. In the event of a fire in the flat the residents will leave shutting the front entrance door behind them. The fire resistance of the doors should be sufficient to resist fire for long enough for other residents to be rescued by the emergency services.

Tenants and leaseholders are not permitted to change the front door to their flat without written permission from LBE. In order to ensure that this door remains fire resisting, any permission will insist that replacement of front doors, frames and door furniture are to be a minimum of 30 minutes fire resisting with intumescent strips and cold smoke seals (FD30S).

Records

A fire record will be held for each high rise/low rise building. It is recommended that Fire Information Boxes (FIB's) are installed to house these records, and are located in a suitable position in agreement with the LFB. This will detail floor layouts with flat number, fire escape routes, fire alarm locations, dry riser locations and known tenant issues.

- Risk Assessment
- Inspections
- Alarm maintenance and servicing (where appropriate)
- Emergency lighting tests
- Visits from a fire officer
- Dry Riser servicing
- Fire Hydrant servicing
- Fires
- Fire near miss incidents

Inspection of Fire Precaution Measures

A regular inspection of passive fire precautions will be undertaken in every building. These inspections are to be conducted at intervals determined by risk and the results recorded. Inspections are to include:

- Front doors to flats
- Landing fire doors
- Staircase fire doors
- Intumescent strips and smoke seals
- Door closers
- Glazing
- Fire stopping to services
- Signage
- Fire loading of communal areas
- Dry riser operation
- Chute hopper seals

Any repairs identified are to be raised without delay and within the timescales detailed in the repairs procedures and specifications.

Other Landlord Responsibilities

Lofts: Where properties form part of a line of joined properties, such as a terrace, the lofts are to be compartmented. Where fire stopping is not present, this will be introduced within a timescale based on risk. Where fire stopping is required in a loft adjoining a leaseholder or owner occupier, LBE will progress the required works in negotiation with the leaseholder and/or owner occupier.

Garages: This is to be read in conjunction with the Tenancy Agreement or Garage Tenancy Agreement. Two general types of garages can be described, battery and integral.

- Battery garages forming distinct garage areas and are separated from adjacent buildings. These present a low risk with compartmentation provided by their construction. No further fire control measures are required
- Integral garages form part of a larger structure, such as a Mews flat or Maisonette. Compartmentation is achieved from the construction, but fire stopping is to be inspected when they become void.
- Where garages are no longer used they will be secured to prevent them from being used for illegal storage or dumping. Where possible the council will decommission and then demolish garages.

Communication with Residents & Residents' Responsibilities. -

Ensuring that residents are fully aware of their responsibilities under the tenancy agreement or lease, and how they can access fire safety advice.

This policy complements Ealing Council's current Tenancy Agreement or Terms of Lease. Most importantly, tenants must not make any material alterations to their homes without the express formal permission of LBE.

All tenants will be briefed on fire safety measures specific to their new home at sign up. They are to be advised that they will be contacted by LFB who will offer a free home safety check and urged to accept the offer, which is free of charge

Tenants are required to provide reasonable access as per the tenancy agreement to Allow LBE to complete annual gas safety checks and allow LFB to conduct their home safety checks.

Tenants and leaseholders will be expected to comply with the terms of their tenancy agreement or leases in all matters that may have a bearing to fire safety. These include or but are not limited to:

Mobility Scooters:

Normally, it would be expected that a tenant would store their mobility scooter within the property. However, a tenant may be permitted to store a maximum of one mobility scooter within a communal area under the following conditions:

- It does not obstruct the main thoroughfare,
- All flammable articles and substances (including oxygen) are removed,
- Charging is not undertaken whilst in the communal area unless specific provision is supplied by LBE.

Security Gates / Doors:

Security gates (gaol gates) or Sitex type doors are NOT PERMITTED and are specifically excluded in the tenancy agreement.

Storage

As a general rule, tenants are not permitted to store possessions in the communal areas of multi-storey buildings.

Large or wooden furniture, curtains and anything that obstructs an escape route or poses a significant fire loading are NOT PERMITTED. Where inappropriate items are stored in communal areas, staff are to make reasonable efforts to discover the owners and request removal. If not removed within a reasonable period (7 days for verbal contact, 21 days if in writing), then these items are to be removed and disposed of.

Fire Doors:

Individual flat front doors provide a key line of defence in fire safety and tenants and leaseholders are not permitted to change the front door to their flat without written permission from LBE.

Significant Changes

Tenants and leaseholders have a duty to request written permission from LBE before commencing any significant changes to their flat will be refused if the fire integrity of the property is likely to be adversely affected. Tenants and leaseholders are required to re-instate any alterations that have not been approved in writing by LBE.

Home Safety Checks

Home safety checks are offered free of charge by LFB and will be promoted by LBE. Any feedback from LFB following a home safety check will be implemented according to the agreed repairs categories. Tenants will be advised that they will be contacted by LFB who will offer a free home safety check and urged to accept the offer, which is free of charge.

Tenants are required to provide reasonable access as per the tenancy agreement to allow LBE to complete annual gas safety checks and allow LFB to conduct their home safety checks.

Fire Safety Information updates will be produced for tenants and leaseholders as required. These updates will be distributed with the tenants' newsletter and via the Internet.

Existing tenants will be recommended to request a free home safety check from LFB. All relevant information and contact numbers will be supplied.

Right to Buy Applicants (Leaseholders)

Right to Buy applicants living in flats are to be informed of the precautions required to reduce the risk of fire when they first apply to buy a property. This information is to be included within the 'Offer Notice' issued to all right to buy applicants.

Existing Leaseholders and Owner Occupiers

Once the property has been sold it is not the responsibility of the LBE to carry out any fire precaution work within the actual dwelling itself. However, LBE will inform leaseholders and relevant owner occupiers of any changes to requirements for fire safety via our website, newsletter and the Leaseholder Development Panel.

If however, the fire risk is within a communal area or affects a communal area, a Risk Assessment must be carried out by a competent person and any remedial actions arising will be taken to reduce risk in an agreed priority.

Evacuation Plan

Where a fire starts in a flat, the occupiers are to leave the flat, closing the front door behind them and raise the alarm (dial 999 and ask for the Fire Service). They should leave the building by the stairs and meet the fire service when they attend.

All other persons should remain in their flat with the doors and windows closed unless there is significant smoke ingress to that flat. If residents feel they are at significant risk, they are to leave their flat, closing the front door behind them and leave the building.

Any person in the common parts of the building is to leave the building by the nearest safe route.

Lifts should not be used in the event of a fire. Smoke venting will be maintained to ensure stairways remain available for evacuation.

Equalities and Diversity.

The council will endeavour to identify and support residents who have an increased risk in the event of fire. This includes those with recognised disabilities who may need assistance to evacuate the building. There may also be residents whose behaviour as a result of vulnerability increases the likelihood of a fire starting.

Liaison with Emergency Services - Engage with the LFB and other emergency services in respect of fire prevention

Ealing Council is committed to working with the London Fire Brigade Service, to create a safer place to live and work. All new tenancies are referred to LFB to contact and carry out a free home safety check. This promotes awareness of fire safety.

Liaison is also a critical part of identifying trends and working with LFB to develop methods of risk identification and risk reduction. Both parties, LBE and LFB, will share relevant information to reduce fire risk to as low as possible and will include:

- Provision of a list of all LBE managed properties,
- Supply of contact details of all new tenants,
- Joint working to enable accurate assessments of risk,
- Provision of LFB training to enhance fire awareness of visiting officers,
- Sharing of the key results of home safety checks,
- Sharing information on fire incidents.

LBE will commit to working with the fire service to promote best practice in reducing fire risk.