

Lambeth Tenants Handbook Health and Safety

Asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous material that has been used in buildings since the 1950s. It is an insulator (keeping in heat and keeping out cold), has good fire-protection properties and protects against rust.

Asbestos is often mixed with other materials and can be difficult to identify. If your property was built before 2000, some parts are likely to contain asbestos. Asbestos is found in many products including ceiling tiles, pipe insulation, boilers and sprayed coatings. Asbestos-containing materials in good condition are not a risk to people's health. In our properties we try to make sure that anything that may contain asbestos remains in good condition, is sealed with paint, and has a warning sign against it. If you suspect that any of these materials contains asbestos or are damaged then please contact us immediately.

You should contact us before doing any of the work listed below in your home. We can tell you whether materials containing asbestos are present in the area where you plan to work.

- Don't drill, cut into, sand or scrape anything you think may contain asbestos
- Always soak wallpaper before removing it. If possible, use a steam stripper and gently peel away the paper before redecorating
- Don't try to remove textured coatings (Artex) from ceilings. Wash any area of flaking paint with sugar soap before repainting
- Don't try to remove old floor tiles or linoleum. Leave them in place and lay new floor coverings over them

The general rule is to always leave asbestos alone.

By law, we must maintain an asbestos register. The asbestos register is essential to managing asbestos in all our properties. It lists all materials that are presumed to contain asbestos or have been confirmed to contain it after laboratory sampling and analysis. You can ask what information we hold on the register about asbestos in your home by contacting us on 020 7926 6000.

Fire safety

Most fires in the home are started accidentally.

You can help keep your home safe by taking a few simple precautions.

Smoke alarms

A smoke alarm is the easiest way to alert you to the danger of fire, giving you time to escape. They are cheap to buy and easy to fit. Ensure you have correctly fitted working smoke alarms in your home by:

- Fitting your alarm according to its instructions
- Testing the alarm regularly and when you return from holidays – by pressing the button on the smoke alarm. If it is working it will ring and flash in the same way as if there is a fire
- Changing the alarm when it comes to the end of its life
- Cleaning the alarm regularly
- Making sure it always has a battery in it
- Changing the battery regularly. Most budget smoke alarms will come with a battery already fitted. This battery will last at least a year after which it must be changed. Consider using a special date to remind you to change it. Some more expensive smoke alarms come with long-life batteries (up to 10 years) and are designed not to be tampered with so they cannot be disabled easily. Make sure you identify which type of smoke alarm you have before trying to change the battery.

Enclosed Communal Areas (e.g. corridors and landings)

- To minimise the risk of trip hazards which in the event of a fire could impact on evacuation these areas must be unobstructed– no items are to be stored / left in the communal areas.
- Combustible items will be removed without notice to mitigate fire safety risks. Such items include:
 - Mobility Scooters
 - Washing Machines / tumble dryers and other white goods
- Other items will be issued with a 24-hour removal notice enabling the resident to make alternative storage arrangements. Such items include:
 - Bicycles
 - Door mats
 - Children's toys and play furniture
 - Clothes / dryers
 - Pictures
 - Plants
 - Pushchairs / Buggies / children's car seats
 - Refuse bags
 - Wooden furniture / upholstered seating
 - Shopping Trolleys
 - Shoes

If we have installed fire doors, door closers, wired smoke alarms or heat detectors, fire action notices in communal areas or in your home do not remove or disable them, as they are designed to keep you safe from fire.

Open Communal Spaces

For the safety of residents, we maintain a zero tolerance policy towards breaches of fire safety. All communal areas that are enclosed or opened and form part of the means of escape must be unobstructed with no items whatsoever left in them. This is to remove all fire and trip hazards and to protect residents' well-being.

The council will take a 'managed approach' for properties with multiple means of escape and below six storeys. In these properties we will allow the following items: framed pictures, pot plants, push chairs, mobility scooters outside front entry doors. There will be further escalation of our managed approach to a zero tolerance approach if risks arise from items left outside front entry doors.

It is important that items left in communal areas are not allowed to hinder emergency evacuation or obstruct disabled refuge points in case of fire. Lambeth Council reserves the right to remove any items left or deposited in communal areas without limitation, should they be causing a fire risk and/or blocking the access to exit routes.

Window and Front Door Gates / Grilles

Based on guidance from the London Fire Brigade (LFB), the council does not permit residents to install gates or grilles across individual property windows and front doors. Such installations are a breach of tenancy and leasehold conditions and are considered to be a potential risk to residents' safety if the fire service needs to gain access in an emergency. A security gate or grille could add significantly to the time it takes the fire service to enter property and they therefore could endanger life.

Where residents have significant safeguarding/security concerns and their door is not secured by design, the door may be replaced with a new fire rated security door. For this, the case would be referred to the London Metropolitan police who could put in place further safeguarding measures.

In these cases, we could need to meet the information sharing requirements of the Crime and Disorder act 1998 and to make the local Fire Station Commissioner aware of additional barriers or security compartment alterations to entrance doors. This still does not permit the installation of grilles.

Where gates or grilles have been installed, a request will be made for removal within a given timescale, failing which the matter will be referred for court action

Home fire-safety visits

The London Fire Brigade offers a free home visits to offer advice on how to make your home safe from fire. Priority is given to people and places where there is known to be a higher risk of fire. This includes older people; people living alone; and people whose mobility, vision and hearing are impaired. It also includes mental-health services users and residents who may be affected by alcohol or drug misuse.

If you would like a visit, or know someone who you think needs help, please contact the London Fire Brigade:

Telephone: 020 8555 1200

Email: info@london-fire.gov.uk

Visit: www.london-fire.gov.uk/HomeFireSafetyVisit.asp

Fire Safety in high-rise blocks

If you live in a flat, it is important you read and understand this extra advice. Each flat in our high-rise blocks is built to withstand fire for 30 to 60 minutes. This allows enough time for the fire brigade to arrive and assess the extent of the fire.

If there is a fire in your home:

- Alert any other people in the flat;
- Leave the room at once and close the door to prevent smoke and fire spreading. Don't tackle the fire yourself unless it is safe to do so;
- Leave the flat calmly, and when everyone is out, close the front door to prevent smoke and fire spreading;
- Leave your block using the emergency exit and not the lift. Don't use balconies unless they are part of an official escape route;
- Call the fire brigade on **999** - it's free from any telephone. Give the operator your address including the number of your flat, **and tell them which floor the fire is on;**
- Make yourself known to the fire brigade as soon as possible.

If there is a fire in your building:

- Stay inside your flat if you don't know where the fire is located;
- Close your front door and your windows to prevent smoke entering your home;
- Listen for instructions from the fire brigade;
- The fire brigade will guide you to a safe location, if they think you should evacuate your home;
- If you feel threatened by fire or smoke and it is safe to leave your flat, leave the building via the emergency exit, closing your front door behind you.

If there is a fire in your building, if you feel threatened by fire or smoke, or your flat is affected by fire or smoke – you should leave the building if it is safe to do so.

Stay in your home if you are not directly affected by the fire, otherwise you may be putting yourself and your household at risk from smoke. Wait for advice and direction from the fire brigade.

Fire Safety in purpose built blocks of flats

1. Your Building

Your flat is in a building designed to a high fire safety standard. You need to be aware of all the escape routes in your flat and the building as **this could save your life in the event of a fire.**

Purpose-built blocks of flats have varying designs, but in most cases the fire escape route is the normal route you take from your flat when leaving the building. Some buildings or flats have an alternative escape route you can use.

When you need to evacuate your flat, in the event of a fire, **one of the following will apply:**

- You walk out of your flat entry door on to a balcony that is open. You can only walk in one direction, to a staircase that takes you to a point on the ground floor where you can leave the building.
- You walk out of your flat entry door on to a balcony that is open. You then can walk in two possible directions to a staircase that takes you to a point on the ground floor where you can leave the building.
- You walk out of your flat entry door into an enclosed lobby or corridor. Then you can only walk in one direction to a staircase that takes you to a point on the ground floor where you can leave the building.
- You walk out of your flat entry door into an enclosed lobby or corridor. Then you can walk in two possible directions to a staircase that takes you to a point on the ground floor where you can leave the building.

2. Multi-Level Flat (maisonette)

The inside of your flat is on two or three levels. There are two main designs to these types of flats when you need to escape in a fire:

- You walk down or up the staircase inside your flat to your flat entry door to get to the common fire escape route for the building.
- On one of the upper or lower floors in your flat there is a door that takes you to an alternative or second escape route from your flat. Once you go through this door it will take you - sometimes via a staircase – to a route that leads into an escape corridor/balcony or staircase. This may not be on the same floor as your normal flat entry door. You need to get to know these escape routes so you remember to use them in a fire.

3. What should you do if there is a fire in your flat?

- Make sure everyone in your flat leaves it. Shut your flat entry door – or alternative escape door - as you leave. This helps keep the fire in your flat and stops the fire and smoke spreading to affect your neighbours;
- Use the fire escape route to safely leave your building;
- Do not use the lift if your building has one;
- Phone the fire brigade by dialling **999**;
- Wait at a safe distance outside your building for the fire brigade to arrive.

4. What should you do if the fire is not in your flat?

The “**Stay Put**” policy asks people to stay safely in their flat if they are not directly affected by the fire. Because of the size and layout of blocks of flats you probably won’t know there is a fire in another flat in your building. Flats are designed to be fire-resistant containers, joined together to make a block of flats. This means the fire should stay in one flat long enough for the fire brigade to arrive and put out the fire before it spreads to any other flat or blocks any escape route. If the fire is in your flat you must leave it, closing the door behind you.

If you feel threatened, can see or smell smoke, or feel heat from a fire in another flat, you should leave your flat and leave the building via the fire escape route if it is safe to do so. **Do not “Stay Put”**.

Stay FIRE SAFE by completing the following

FIRE SAFETY CHECK LIST SINGLE LEVEL FLAT

1. There is a working smoke alarm in my flat
Yes / No
2. Everybody who lives in my flat has walked all of the fire escape routes from the flat entrance door to the exit from the building
Yes / No

FIRE SAFETY CHECK LIST MULTI - LEVEL FLAT

1. There is a working smoke alarm in my flat
Yes / No
2. Everybody who lives in my flat has walked all of the fire escape routes from the flat entrance door to the exit from the building
Yes / No
3. I have checked to see if there is a second escape point from my flat
Yes / No

4. Everybody who lives in my flat has walked the second escape point to the exit from the building Yes / No

Always keep exit routes clear.

Your Neighbourhood Housing Officer may take appropriate tenancy enforcement action against residents who persistently leave rubbish or their personal belongings in passageways.

If you want more information about fire safety, please contact the Fire Safety Team:

Telephone: 020 7926 4270

Email: HMfiresafety@lambeth.gov.uk

Visit: <https://housingmanagement.lambeth.gov.uk>

Gas safety

Every year we must check all our gas appliances and pipework to reduce the risk of an explosion or carbon monoxide poisoning. We will always use Gas Safe registered engineers. You must allow our contractor into your home to do the safety check. Up to two months before the last Gas Certificate expires, they will write to you with an appointment. You will be able to identify the contractor by their identity pass.

These safety checks do not cover gas appliances you own, such as a gas cooker that you have installed. It is your responsibility to get these appliances checked regularly by a Gas Safe registered engineer. For more details:

Telephone: 0800 408 5500

Visit: www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Signs your appliance(s) may be dangerous

Contact us or a Gas Safe engineer if you spot any signs that your appliance may not be working properly.

These include:

- Yellow or orange flames, rather than blue (apart from fuel-effect fires or flueless appliances, which display only yellow or orange flames)
- Soot, yellow or brown staining around or on appliances
- Pilot lights that often blowout
- Increased condensation inside windows

Carbon monoxide alarms

For your own and your household's safety, you are advised to fit an audible carbon monoxide alarm in your home. A carbon monoxide alarm works in a similar way to a smoke alarm, sounding an alarm if it detects carbon monoxide.

You can buy alarms from most hardware stores. We recommend you buy one that has a British or European mark of approval- such as a Kitemark – to standard BS EN 50219. We do not recommend buying a 'black spot' detector (which changes colour when carbon monoxide is present), as it will not make any sound.

It is important to choose an alarm that will wake you up if you are asleep or you may not be aware of carbon monoxide symptoms until it is too late. Carbon monoxide

alarms usually have a battery life of up to five years, so it is important to regularly test and replace the battery as needed.

We recommend you fit an alarm in each room with a gas appliance, after reading the maker's instructions.

Water Safety

We inspect and maintain water systems which have communal Storage Tanks.

To ensure your water system remains free from dirt and blockages, we advise you to de-scale your shower heads every three months. If you haven't used a tap or shower for a while, let the water run for a few minutes before using it again, to allow fresh water to come through from the mains water supply.

Ice and snow

Our contractors do their best to keep communal paths clear and gritted in cold weather. We recommend you use these paths in icy or snowy weather, rather than cutting across shorter routes. If you want to make a difference and help your community during periods of heavy snow, sign up to Lambeth Council's volunteer snow warden scheme. The scheme provides residents and communities with the training, equipment and grit needed to keep paths and quieter residential roads free from snow.

For more information about the snow warden scheme:

Telephone: 020 7926 0524

Email: SnowWardens@lambeth.gov.uk