

Housing21

# Building and Fire Safety at Housing 21

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# Introduction

Housing 21 is committed to ensuring the safety of our residents, visitors and employees.

Safety inspections are carried out before the start of your tenancy. To ensure your ongoing safety, we may periodically require access to your property. All residents are encouraged to have open communications and raise any concerns, please either:

- Contact your manager
- Contact your Operations Manager
- Raise concerns at the annual resident engagement meetings



# Fire safety

Fire safety is a priority for us. Residents can play a key part in helping to reduce the risk of fire within their properties. There are key preventative measures you can take.

## Fire doors

- Fire doors should be kept shut when not in use as a fire door only works when it is closed
- Do not tamper with self-closing devices
- Report any fault or damage immediately to your manager

## Cooking

- Never leave cooking unattended
- If you leave the kitchen, take pans off the heat. Take a reminder with you, like a timer or oven mitt, to remind you that you are cooking
- Do not cook if you are drowsy from medication
- Double check the oven and hob is switched off after use
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the oven and hob
- Ensure saucepan handles are turned in to prevent them from being knocked over

## Smoking

Fires caused by smoking materials are often the result of incorrect disposal and lapses in concentration. It is sensible to:

- Never leave cigarettes, pipes or cigars unattended
- Ensure cigarettes, pipes and cigars are properly extinguished
- Never overfill ashtrays
- Always use lighters rather than matches
- Avoid smoking in bed and take care when you are tired
- Avoid smoking while under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Use a purpose-built, heavy ashtray that will not tip and is made of material that will not burn

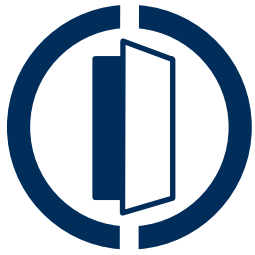
## Candles

If you use candles:

- Never leave them burning when you go to sleep
- Always put them out if you leave the room
- Always use an appropriate candle holder
- Keep them away from any flammable materials e.g. curtains

## Bedtime checklist

A lot of fires start at night. There are some safety checks you can do before you go to bed:



1

Close all inside doors and ensure access to the front door is clear



2

Turn off heaters unless essential. Electric blankets should also be switched off



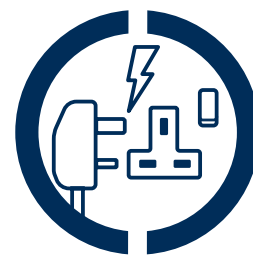
3

Extinguish candles and cigarettes



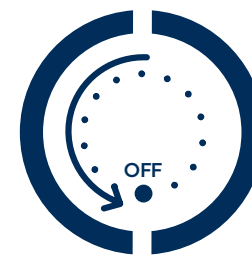
4

Have easy access to a phone



5

Unplug items that use electricity, unless they need to remain on (e.g. fridge/freezer)



6

Check the cooker controls are off



7

Put keys where everyone in the property can find them, but are not visible to potential burglars



## Evacuation

It is important that you know what to do if there is a fire and how you can remain safe.

Please familiarise yourself with the exit routes for your scheme, nearest assembly point and the evacuation strategy. If you are in doubt please contact your manager who will inform you of the policy for your scheme.

### If a fire breaks out in your home

- Do not ignore your smoke or heat alarm if activated
- If a door feels hot, there probably is a fire on the other side
- If there is a fire in a room, leave straight away, close the door and any other doors to prevent the spread of fire
- Tell everyone else in your home to evacuate
- Do not stay behind to put out the fire or collect personal possessions
- Do not use the lifts and walk calmly to the designated place of safety
- Call the Fire Service immediately by dialling 999 or 112

## To call the Fire Service

1. **Dial 999 or 112**
2. When the operator answers give your telephone number and ask for 'fire'
3. When the Fire Service replies, give the address of where the fire is
4. Do not end the call until the Fire Service has repeated the address correctly
5. Never re-enter the building until authorised to do so

## What is Housing 21 doing to manage fire safety?

Fire safety guidance will be provided to new residents during the sign-up process. Your manager will also complete a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment and discuss any health and safety issues with you.

Your local Fire Service provide a 'Safe and Well' service that you may wish to look into; your manager can help to arrange this. We have a dedicated team of Building Surveyors who conduct a comprehensive fire risk assessment of your building on an annual basis.

As your landlord, Housing 21 will ensure that where appropriate, all fire alarm and early warning systems (smoke/ heat detectors) are examined and serviced by a specialist contractor.

In addition, as part of the lettable standard inspection, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are inspected within properties when they become void and again when they are ready to re-let.





# Mobility vehicles

Mobility scooters and electric wheelchairs can help people with mobility problems lead more active lives. If you have a mobility vehicle, or are thinking of getting one, please speak with your manager to determine if there is a place you can store it safely and securely within the building.

For fire safety reasons, mobility vehicles must not be stored or charged in communal areas. Some schemes have a designated mobility vehicle store.

If you are to keep a mobility vehicle on Housing 21 premises you are required to have third-party insurance and service the vehicle, to include PAT testing.



# Condensation and damp

Condensation is a common issue found in buildings. However, if left untreated it can cause mould to form on walls and furniture and can aggravate health problems.

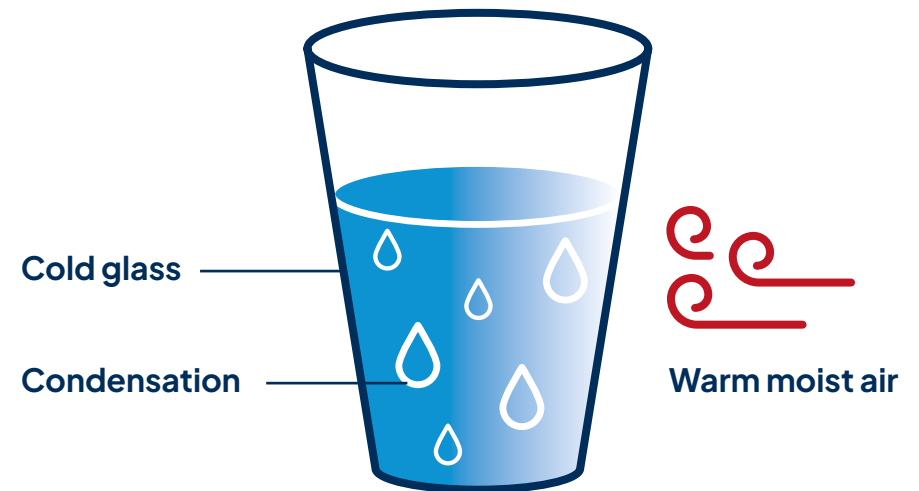
## What is condensation?

As the name suggests, condensation is water which has “condensed” from warm, moist air on contact with a cold surface. Air holds water in the form of water vapour.

While it is not always visible, there is always some moisture in the air. It is noticeable when the mirror mists over after a shower, or when you see your breath on a cold day.

When lots of condensation occurs in a building, mould may appear on cold external walls, around windows and in places where the air does not circulate well. It can be fairly common for it to appear in bathrooms and kitchens as the moisture levels will be high.






Excessive moisture can damage clothes, furnishing and decoration. It can leave a musty smell. Severe condensation may exacerbate health problems like asthma, bronchitis, arthritis and rheumatism.





## Where does water come from?

A lot of everyday actions can produce water vapour. The amounts below illustrate the typical volumes of water produced by carrying out tasks.

Cooking	3 Litres	
Breathing/ perspiring	3 Litres	
Showering/ bathing	1.5 Litres	
Clothes drying	1.5 Litres	
Clothes washing	0.5 Litres	

Given the amounts of vapour produced, it is important to know how to manage condensation.





## Three ways to tackle condensation

### 1 Stop moisture build up

- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles
- Cover boiling pans
- Do not hang washing over radiators
- Close bathroom and kitchen doors to prevent steam

### 2 How to ventilate the home

- When cooking or washing, open windows or extractors
- When drying clothes inside, do so in small rooms with the windows open
- Open windows for a while during the day or use trickle/ night vents
- Allow air to circulate around furniture and cupboards. You can do this by making sure cupboards and wardrobes are not overfilled and there is space between the furniture and wall

### 3 How to heat the home

- Maintain a low heat when the weather is cold or wet as this is more effective than short bursts of high heat
- Set your heating to provide warmth in all rooms, including those which are unused
- Use thermostatically-controlled radiator valves (where available) to control room temperatures
- Avoid using paraffin or flueless bottled gas heaters
- Use a dehumidifier if required

## First steps against mould

Mould is a living organism which needs killing to remove. To do this:

- Wipe down affected areas with fungicidal wash. Ensure that the cleaning product you use carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approved number and always follow the manufacturer's instructions for use and storage
- Do not use bleach or washing up liquid
- Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets
- Do not brush or vacuum mould as this releases spores into the air, increasing the risk of respiratory problems

## The difference between damp and condensation

Not all damp is caused by condensation. Damp can also occur when a fault in a building lets water in from the ground or outside. Penetrative damp and rising damp are the two types to be particularly aware of.

Penetrating damp occurs when water is coming in through the walls, roof or cracks. For example, it may travel under a loose roof tile, leaking pipe or waste overflow.

Rising damp is relatively rare. The usual evidence of rising damp is a 'tide mark' on the walls that shows how the water has risen up through the walls. If there are signs of rising damp it can mean there is a problem with the damp proof course.

If you suspect penetrating or rising damp in your property, inform your manager immediately.



Penetrating damp



Rising damp

# Gas safety

Housing 21 has a legal duty to undertake an annual gas safety check on all gas appliances. If you have a gas appliance, such as a boiler, in your property we will require access for a gas engineer to undertake an annual safety check. You will be provided with a gas safety certificate following the inspection.

Your tenancy agreement states that you must allow access given reasonable notice for the purpose of a gas inspection. Your manager will make you aware when your gas safety check is due to take place. If you are not going to be available when the annual check is scheduled, please let your manager know so we can reschedule.

## **If you smell gas you should:**

- Open doors and windows
- Do not turn electrical switches or lights on or off, or pull an emergency pull cord if near the suspected leak – this could result in a spark which could cause an explosion
- Do not smoke, light matches, use naked flames
- Leave your home, moving to a place of safety
- Contact National Grid on the gas emergency number: **0800 111 999**
- Inform your manager

## **Carbon monoxide**

Where a gas boiler is present, CO alarms are installed by the service contractor and are tested as part of the gas inspection. Carbon monoxide cannot be seen, smelt or tasted. If your alarm sounds or you suspect a leak you should:

- Inform your manager if you have a gas boiler and do not have a carbon monoxide alarm or if your alarm is faulty
- Stop using all appliances, switch them off and open doors/ windows to ventilate the property
- Leave the property immediately, moving to a place of safety
- Call the National Grid's gas emergency number on: **0800 111 999**
- Not go back into your property, wait for the advice from the emergency services
- Inform your manager
- Seek immediate medical help



# Electrical safety

A large number of domestic fires are caused by electrical faults. It is vital to look after electrical equipment – just because it works does not mean it is safe.

Inspect your electrical equipment and fittings to ensure they are in good condition:

- The cable should be firmly secured in the plug
- None of the pins should be bent and plugs should not ‘rattle’
- Plug casings should be free from cracks
- Look for burn marks or any signs of overheating
- Plugs should fit tightly into sockets

## **How to keep your home safe:**

- Never overload sockets or plug adaptors
- Take care with second-hand electrical items; ensure they have been safety checked and are not listed on the product recall register
- If you are concerned about the safety of a product, stop using it and make your concern known to the retailer or Trading Standards office
- Never store combustible materials near your fuse box or electricity meter
- Never take mains power electrical items into the bathroom
- Switch off electrical items which are not in use

## **What is Housing 21 doing to manage electrical safety?**

Housing 21 is required by law to ensure your property’s electrical installation and wiring is safe when you move in and that it is maintained in a safe condition throughout your tenancy. We test and inspect all properties we manage, including communal areas, at least once every five years and inspect properties before re-letting them to new tenants.

Your manager will make you aware when testing is expected to happen. After testing takes place, any repairs identified through the check will then be carried out.

You should contact your manager if you have any electrical problems within your property and they will arrange for an electrician to come to your home.



# Water hygiene and legionella

It is important to make sure water is fresh and free from harmful bacteria, such as legionella. Most household water systems contain some bacteria and other organisms which do not cause any problems. However, if the bacteria have the right conditions to multiply they can become potentially harmful and can cause people to become ill.

## **To lower the risk of any build-up of potentially harmful bacteria, please:**

- Do not interfere with the settings on your boiler or hot water system. The thermostat should be set at 60°C
- If the temperature of your hot water changes, either the hot cools down or the cold temperature goes up, please notify your manager
- Ensure any taps or showers within a property that are not used regularly, i.e. for one week or more, are flushed\* for a minimum of five minutes every seven days
- Ensure taps and shower heads are clean and free of limescale by regularly descaling and cleaning the shower head and hose every three months. If you are in an Extra Care property, shower head cleaning will take place every three months
- Inform your manager if your hot water is not working properly, particularly if there is no hot water

## **If you are away from your home for more than seven days, on your return:**

- Run every tap for at least five minutes
- Slowly flush cold taps until the water is really cold
- If you have a shower, remove the shower head before flushing\* and lower the hose to the base of the shower

## **What is Housing 21 doing to manage water safety?**

As a landlord, Housing 21 carries out water hygiene risk assessments and monitoring regimes, actioning identified remedial works, across all its properties, as required.

\*When flushing taps or other outlets, open them slowly so you don't splash water or release water droplets into the air. Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia which people can catch by inhaling small droplets of contaminated water containing the bacteria.

# Asbestos

Asbestos-containing materials are common in many buildings across the country. Properties built after 1999 do not contain asbestos. When asbestos-containing materials become damaged, there is the possibility of fibres being released into the air which is a possible risk to health.

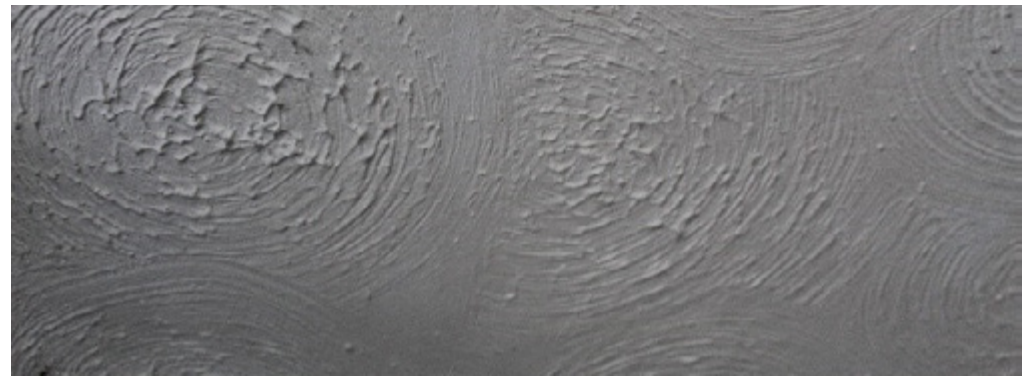
Do not tamper with, or touch any asbestos materials; it is safe if it is not damaged or disturbed.

You cannot tell just by looking if a material contains asbestos. If you are unsure whether a material contains asbestos or not, contact your manager and they will refer to the asbestos management survey.

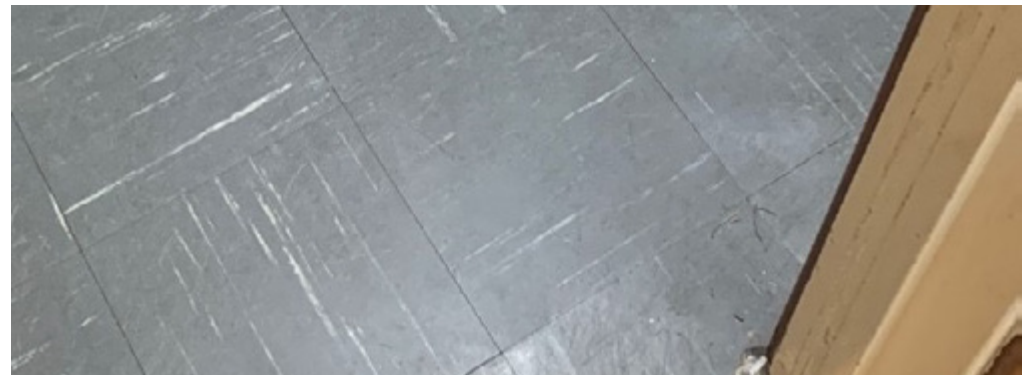
## How to keep your home safe:

- Inform your manager if you intend to carry out any DIY work in your home, so that we can provide asbestos information
- If your property was built prior to 1999 there is a possibility that it may have asbestos-containing floor tiles, these are considered a very low risk and have no impact if undisturbed. If your property does contain asbestos floor tiles, the flooring should only be removed by somebody who is appropriately trained
- Do not attempt to remove asbestos, this can only be done by licensed professionals
- Do not attempt to clean, brush or vacuum asbestos
- Inform your manager immediately if you are concerned that asbestos has been disturbed in your home

## Examples of where asbestos may be found in the home:

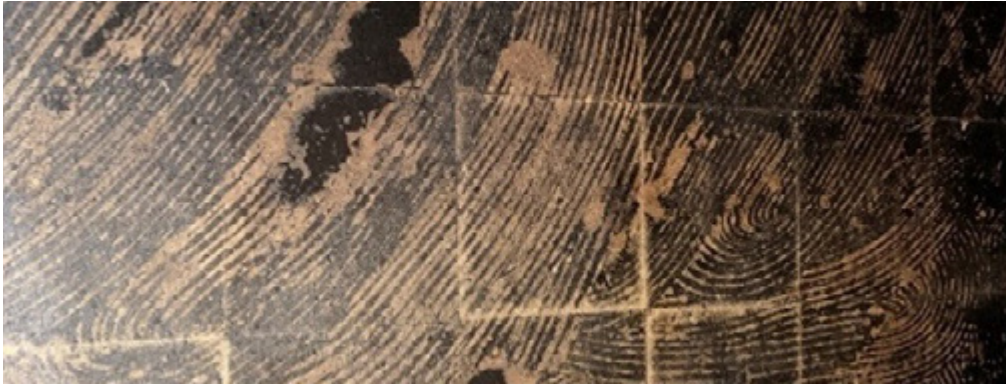


**Asbestos textured decorative coating**



**Asbestos vinyl floor tiles**





**Asbestos bitumen adhesive use to stick floor tiles down**



**Loose fill blue asbestos from a wall cavity**

## What is Housing 21 doing to manage asbestos?

Housing 21 has a duty to manage asbestos in the communal areas of our properties and we undertake asbestos management surveys every five years. If asbestos is identified, a reinspection will be carried out on an annual basis.

We also carry out surveys in individual dwellings before contractors undertake some types of works in properties.





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