

# FIRE SAFETY

## SUMMARY

- This is not a guide to the fire safety in a specific block of flats.

### ***MOST FIRES IN BLOCKS OF FLATS START WITHIN THE FLATS***

- Electrical faults for example from overloaded sockets are the most common cause.
- Cigarettes that have not been put out properly in an individual's flat, noting that it is against the law to smoke in communal areas.
- Cigarettes smoked by someone leaning out of a window and throwing the butt away.
- Chip and frying pan fires are caused when someone forgets to turn off the gas.
- Fragranced candles are popular but make sure they are extinguished when leaving a room, when leaving the flat or retiring to bed.

### ***PREVENTING FIRES WITHIN YOUR FLAT***

The best protection from fire is prevention. Your Landlord and Managing Agent have a duty to take steps to prevent fires in communal areas but you can ensure your home is as safe as possible too. Remember most fires in blocks of flats start within a flat and not normally within the communal areas.

- Have you got smoke detectors? These are the most effective way of preventing fires and also give vital early warning and extra time to escape. Mains wired detectors are the safest.
- Install smoke detectors and test them weekly.
- If they are not mains wired, change the battery every year.
- Change the smoke detector every 10 years.
- Are the doors in your flat in good condition and do they shut property? Never remove internal doors or wedge them open.
- If you are planning to change any door or the internal layout of your flat, you should think about the implications for Fire Safety. Contact your Landlord or Managing Agent first.
- Close internal doors at night.
- Make sure everyone knows where you keep the keys for the main door.

### ***FRONT DOORS OF FLATS***

Your front door is a vital part of the Fire Safety of the block, not just for you but also your neighbours. It protects fire and smoke from spreading to the communal areas and obstructing the escape route for the block. Do not alter it without first taking advice on the implications for Fire Safety and seeking permission from your Landlord or Managing Agent.

Your front door should have a self-closing device fitted to it to meet Fire Safety guidance for flats – please do not remove it.

Do not change the letter box or add a cat flap without considering the question of Fire Safety of your flat and the communal areas and escape routes.

Under new legislation it may be a requirement to replace the door to your flat to comply with up to date regulations.

## ***FIRE SAFETY AND THE COMMON PARTS OF FLATS***

Your Landlord or Managing Agent has a legal duty to arrange for a Health, Safety & Fire Risk Assessment to be carried out for the communal areas and for it to be kept under review. Please see the below:

- Do not obstruct the communal areas or the escape route for the block.
- Do not prop open communal area Fire Doors.
- Do not litter the stairs, corridors and landing with goods or anything that is flammable.
- Do not store any personal belongings such as prams, bicycles or mobility scooters in communal areas.
- If you see things in communal areas that should not be there, report them to your Landlord or Managing Agent.
- No combustible materials are permitted in any communal cupboards including cupboards that have electrical distribution boards.
- Do not leave rubbish in the refuse store that is not put away in bins. Loose material is easily used to set fire to communal areas.

## ***SOME PRINCIPLES OF FIRE SAFETY IN BLOCKS OF FLATS***

Most purpose built flats and modern conversions are designed with certain principles in mind as follows:

- There is a high degree of compartmentation between each flat and between flats and the communal areas.
- There is a low probability of the spread of fire beyond the flat of origin if the appropriate Fire Safety measures have been put in place.
- The front door to each flat must be a Fire Safety Door and comply with the appropriate FD rating.

If these design principles are in place then the following Fire Safety Principles should apply:

- Most blocks of flats have a stay put policy that will apply. This means that unless the fire breaks out in your flat, it is safest to stay inside your property unless you are asked to leave by the Fire Brigade.
- If a fire breaks out in your flat, then you should immediately call the Fire Brigade and evacuate your property.

## ***THE FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT OF COMMON PARTS***

It is a legal requirement that all purpose built blocks of flats, HMO's and conversions **MUST** have a Health, Safety & Fire Risk Assessment carried out every 2 years. This Assessment covers all communal areas including communal grounds and gardens and will details any risk factors or areas of concern. The responsibility for the assessment to be undertaken ultimately falls within the remit of either your Landlord or Managing Agent.

Any areas of concern that arise from the assessment will be reviewed by your Landlord or Managing Agent and the appropriate steps to reduce these risks will be undertaken.