

Home Safety Inspection Checklist

More than 4,000 people die in accidents in the home and nearly three million turn up at accident and emergency departments seeking treatment. People renting accommodation may be more at risk than others. New legislation will soon be implemented under the Housing Act 2004 which will look at hazards more closely in housing and 'hazard spotting' for landlords and tenants will be even more important. Here is a general checklist for you, to check your home so that you can try to avoid some of the hazards to prevent accidents or obtain further advice.

- Are carpets and other floor finishes properly fitted down?
- Are loose mats non-slip on the underside?
- Is lighting good at changes in floor level, steps and stairs?
- Are stairways and landings protected safely? Do they have handrails?
- Are windows child safe (& can you still get out in an emergency)?
- Is any low level glazing properly fitted with safety glass?
- Do floors, stairs or other parts of the building seem unsafe in other ways?
- Are anti-topple brackets fitted to cookers and cooker safety guards where children are present?
- Are worksurfaces sufficient to keep children away from kettles & other hot or sharp objects? Do they fit close enough to both sides of the cooker to help stop children from reaching pan handles?
- Are self-closing fire doors, smoke detectors, fire alarms, & emergency lighting fitted & maintained?
- Is a fire blanket provided in the kitchen area? Do you know how to use it?
- In a fire, could you leave the building by the front door without using a key & reach a place of safety?
- Do gas appliances work properly? Is there discolouring around gas fires or the top of water heaters?
- Have you seen the Gas Safety Certificate that the landlord should get for your home each year?
- Do electrical wires trail where they can be damaged, be in contact with water or be a trip hazard?
- Are electrical sockets overloaded, overheating, or giving electric shocks? Are wires old or damaged?
- Is furniture labelled as complying with fire regulations and a warning that 'Carelessness causes fire'?

- Do people who are young, elderly, have a disability or who are otherwise less able to react to an accident or emergency situation live in or visit your home? Is special care, advice or help needed?

Who is responsible?

Even if you are renting accommodation, although your landlord has certain responsibilities, it is vitally important that YOU take time to help yourself by carrying out a safety check of your own home surroundings -- it may prevent an accident or even save a life!

Under Management Regulations that apply to houses in multiple occupation, a landlord has a duty to ensure that adequate precautions are taken to protect the safety of residents. If you are a tenant, you may find that your landlord or managing agent will help you and you must tell them of your concerns. If you are a managing agent or a landlord you too can use the checklist to help you in your legal obligations.

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Other useful telephone numbers:

Emergency Services - 999

Gas Emergencies - call British Gas - 0800 111 999

NHS Direct - 0845 4647

HOME SAFETY INFORMATION

Fire Safety:

Fire obviously poses a serious risk. Many fires can be avoided but, if a fire does begin, you need to know how to react in such an emergency.

Structural fire precautions, such as fire doors and self-closing devices, can help prevent the spread of fire.

Fire detection devices, such as smoke detectors and alarms, can give early warning of a fire.

A safe, clearly marked, unobstructed escape route with emergency lighting can provide a safe, quick means of escape from the fire.

But, remember, it's not only important that adequate fire precautions are in place, but also that they are regularly tested and maintained by a suitably qualified person (such as a NICEIC registered contractor) and that residents and visitors are aware of what action to take in a fire. In the event of fire: " alert people by raising the alarm; " contain the fire, closing doors behind which the fire has started; " evacuate people, get out, stay out and call the Fire Service immediately.

Cooking fat and chip pans are a very high source of fire in the home. Fire blankets should be readily accessible within the kitchen area and you should know how and when to use them. Do you?

Gas, electrics and faulty appliances:

Landlords must ensure that all gas installations and appliances are safety checked and maintained by a CORGI registered gas engineer at least once a year, and that copies of this report are available to tenants. Are you safe?

If you suspect a gas leak, contact British Gas immediately.

Second-hand gas appliances should only be bought from a reputable dealer and should be certificated as properly safety checked. Faulty gas appliances can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning and ultimately to death. Since carbon monoxide has no colour, no smell and no taste, it is difficult to detect - therefore you should watch out for the danger signs such as: discolouring around a gas fire or at the top of a water heater; " a yellow or orange flame on a gas fire or water heater; " a strange smell when the gas appliance is on.

If you have any reason to suspect that a faulty appliance may be leading to carbon monoxide build-up contact British Gas immediately.

All work to electrical installations and appliances should be carried out by a competent person (ideally by a NICEIC registered electrician).

Faulty or misused electrics can cause fire or electrocution!

Electrical wires or extension leads must not trail where they can be damaged, come into contact with water or be a trip hazard.

Electrical sockets should not be overloaded.

Second-hand electrical appliances should only be bought from a reputable dealer and should be certificated as properly safety checked. Particular care must be taken with heating appliances and with appliances where door interlocks are appropriate, such as washing machines.

Thermostats for hot water supplies should not exceed 54°C (130°F) to avoid risk of scalding.

Remember, whether gas or electric, keep heating appliances away from flammable materials!

Furniture and Furnishings:

All furniture and furnishings, whether new or second-hand, supplied in the course of letting accommodation should comply with fire safety standards.

The fire safety of any other furniture or furnishings that you use yourself, is obviously just as important. Checking whether or not an armchair, for example, meets the relevant standard is not easy but, if you are in any doubt, check labels and be suspicious of old items. For further advice, contact the City Council's Trading Standards Service.

External Links

- [Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents](#)
- [NICEIC](#)
- [CORGI](#)