

guide to fire safety

Fire safety should be a vital issue for everyone living in rented accommodation, yet some tenants still tamper with fire safety equipment and risk their lives.

If you are living in rented or shared accommodation there's an increased risk that you could have a fire and students are at particularly high risk.

There are over 70,000 fires in homes across the UK each year, hundreds are killed and thousands are injured.

Fire kills and if you interfere with equipment such as fire extinguishers, fire alarms and smoke alarms etc you are risking your own life and endangering the lives of other tenants.

What may seem as a harmless bit of fun at the time, such as letting off a fire extinguisher, can lead to the loss of life if a fire should break out in your accommodation.

The dangers of fire are considerable, but by spending a little bit of time reading this advice and a little bit more applying it, the risks can be greatly reduced.

common hazards

- **Smoking**
 - Never smoke in bed
 - Empty ashtrays regularly
 - Take special care if you're tired or have been drinking
- **Cooking Chips**
 - Use a deep fat fryer, never use a chip pan
 - Never fill the fryer more than a third with oil or fat and never leave unattended
- **Electrics**
 - Never overload sockets
 - Always switch off appliances at the socket when not in use, and turn them off at night
 - Always use the correct fuse
- **Candles**
 - Place candles in or on ceramic holders
 - Never leave them unattended or near combustible materials
 - Extinguish them properly before bed
- **Heaters and Fire**
 - Don't leave or hang clothes within a metre of a heater
 - Ensure portable heaters can't be knocked over
 - Always use a fireguard
- **Furniture and Fabrics**
 - Check the labels to see if it was made after 1988, if not, it's not fire resistant and easily ignited by a cigarette

fit a smoke alarm

Smoke alarms cost as little as £5.00, are available from hardware shops, supermarkets and electrical stores and can save your life in the event of a fire. Their purpose is to wake you up before you die of smoke inhalation.

Statistics show that you are six times more likely to die in a fire if you live in a home without a working smoke alarm.

Ideally you should have at least one smoke detector on each floor. They should be located on the ceilings of landing and hallways, at least 300mm away from walls or light fittings.

SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES – FIT ONE TODAY

Maintaining your Smoke Alarm:

- Test every Monday.
- Replace the battery every year.
- Vacuum the vents of your smoke detector twice a year.
- Never cover the detector.
- **NEVER REMOVE THE BATTERY OR ISOLATE THE POWER SUPPLY**

fire safety

Make an Escape Plan

If a fire occurs in your home and the power fails you will have to get out in dark and smoky conditions. Escaping from a fire is a lot easier if you have planned an escape route and are familiar with the features along it.

Keep Your Escape Route Clear

Always ensure that you keep your escape route clear, It will usually be your normal way in and out but an obstruction could be life threatening under fire conditions.

Exiting from your Property

We recommend that all lockable doors are fitted with an easy open device. If however your doors and windows are key operated ensure that the keys are easily accessed. Make sure that everyone staying in the house knows where the keys are.

Do a Before Bed Check

Before you go to bed you should always carry out a simple check to ensure:

- Internal doors are closed.
- Cigarettes are completely extinguished.
- Cooker and heaters are off.
- Electrical appliances are off.
- All candles are extinguished.

Ask Your Landlord to Provide

- Proof that any integrated fire alarm system is regularly maintained.
- A recent electrical inspection certificate.
- Proof that chimneys and flues have been maintained and cleaned.

- Where the property has a gas installation and/or appliances, a certificate issued within the last 12 months by a Corgi registered contractor.
- Proof that the property complies with the applicable standards for the size and type of house in multiple occupation.

Be aware though that the landlord may not be legally obliged to carry out these checks. Should you have any problems you should contact a Students' Union, the Housing Rights Service or the Housing Executive for advice.

Cooking Safety: Fires in the Kitchen

If you are not sure if you can deal with a fire, get out, call the Fire Brigade and stay out.

Chip Pan Fires:

- Don't move it, you could receive horrendous burns.
- If possible, turn off the heat. Never lean over a flaming pan to reach the controls.
- If available put a fire blanket over the pan, if not;
- Run a cloth under a tap, wring it out and place over the pan.
- **NEVER PUT WATER ON A FLAMING CHIP PAN**

Electrical Fires:

- Pull out the plug or switch off the power at the fuse box.
- If available, smother the appliance with a fire blanket or use a dry powder or CO₂ extinguisher.
- **NEVER THROW WATER ON AN ELECTRICAL FIRE**

what to do in a fire

If you discover a fire, calmly take the following action:

- Leave the room and close the door.
- Tell everyone in the house. **RAISE THE ALARM**
- **GET OUT**
- **CALL THE FIRE BRIGADE OUT**
- **STAY OUT**
- Only re-enter the building when the Fire Brigade tell you it is safe to do so.

What to do if you are cut off by Fire

- Block bottom of doorways with blankets or coats.
- Stay low and get to a window.
- With the door shut, open the window and call for help.
- If you have a phone dial 999, if not, call for someone else to.
- If you cannot open the window, break it and cover the broken edges with a blanket or coat.
- If you can safely escape from the window, do so. Remember to avoid jumping from a window, lower yourself down to arms length and drop to the ground.
- If escape through the window is impractical, then wait by the window with your head in fresh air until help arrives.

further information

Northern Ireland Fire Brigade
1 Seymour Street, Lisburn BT27 4SX
Tel: (028) 9266 4221

NUS-USI, 29 Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7EJ
Tel: (028) 9024 4641
Email info@nistudents.org
Web www.nistudents.org

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Private Sector Improvement Services (HMO)
2 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8PB
Tel: (028) 9024 0588

Internet

www.nifb.org.uk – Northern Ireland Fire Brigade
www.firekills.gov.uk – good fire safety resources
www.firesafetytoolbox.org.uk – guide to UK fire service

Issued by the NUS-USI Student Movement in Northern Ireland, Landlords Association of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Northern Ireland Fire Brigade.

This leaflet is available in alternative formats. Contact:
Private Sector Improvements Services (HMO)
Northern Ireland Housing Executive,
The Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street,
Belfast BT2 8PB
Tel: (028) 9024 0588
Email: hmo.central@nihe.gov.uk

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