



# Fire Hazards

## Hazard information for landlords

Over 35,000 dwelling fires were reported to the Fire Brigades in the UK over 2017/18. It is suspected that this figure is only one fifth of the total number of uncontrolled fires.

The most common cause of death from a fire is being overcome by gas or smoke, followed by burns.

The elderly and children under four years of age are most at risk. Impairment of mobility increases vulnerability and decreases the ability to escape in good time. Unfortunately, more children die from carbon monoxide poisoning (mainly as a result of fires) than from any other poisoning.

Exposure to smoke and gas can also have long term health implications, including respiratory issues.

### Causes

The main sources of ignition traceable to the dwelling (rather than the occupants) are cooking appliances, space heaters and electrical distribution equipment.

Whilst many accidental fires are due to occupier carelessness or misuse of equipment, others can be caused by faulty equipment, poor design and layout or lack of maintenance, disrepair to electrical appliances, cooking facilities, space heating appliances and electrical distribution (both wiring and cabling).

The level of harm is directly influenced by the presence or absence of a fire detection and alarm system.

### Relevant Legislation

- Housing Act 2004
- Smoke and carbon Monoxide Regulations 2015
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988/89, 1993 and 2010
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (2005)

## Legal obligations of the landlord

There should be a fully operational smoke alarm on each storey where there is a room used as living accommodation. These must be routinely checked at the start of every new tenancy.

The design and maintenance of the property should allow for a safe fire escape route from all rooms and should not provide fire hazards and/or ignition sources.

The electrical installation and any electrical equipment (supplied by the landlord) must be safe.

Furniture and furnishings provided must be fire safe.

All communal fire escapes must be well maintained and kept free from obstruction at all times.

## Recommendations

- Put a wall mounted fire blanket adjacent, but not directly above, the cooking facilities.
- Carry out electrical safety periodic testing and inspection to ensure the installation is free of defects and possible fire hazards and ignition sources.
- Make sure the number of sockets provided are enough, to prevent the need for extension leads and overloaded sockets.
- Upgrade the distribution board and wiring so that it meets the current IET Regulations and include the provision of a Residual Current Device (RCD).
- Do PAT testing all of all electrical equipment provided by the landlord.
- Add locks in the fire escape route conforming to British standard 8621 providing keyless egress (internal thumb turns).
- Make sure all ignition sources are appropriately sited away from any combustibles.

For more information on fire safety in the home, please visit:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/fire-and-rescue/your-home/fire-safety-in-your-home.aspx>