

Housing and environment

Home safety guide

Building and fire safety for council housing tenants



Having asbestos in your home is no reason to panic. It is only when materials containing asbestos are damaged or disturbed that asbestos becomes hazardous.

What is asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous material. It is resistant to heat, electricity, and chemical damage. Asbestos-containing materials (ACM's) are versatile and were used extensively as building materials in the UK between the 1950's and 1980's.

Asbestos use was banned in 1999, however asbestos-containing materials can still be found in many buildings built or refurbished before the year 1999.

Examples of asbestos-containing materials (ACM's)



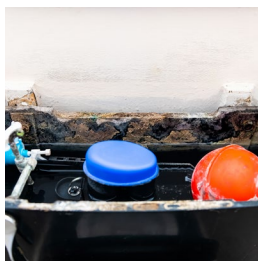
textured coating
(Artex)



corrugated cement
roofing



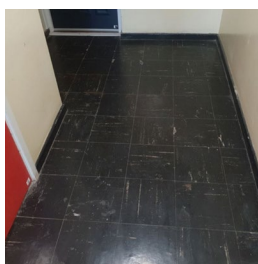
cement water
tanks



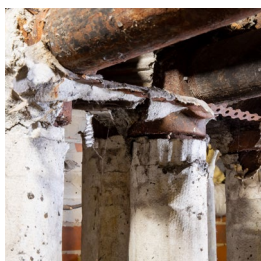
toilet cisterns



asbestos insulating
board (AIB)



vinyl floor tiles



pipe
insulation

Am I at risk?

The risk to you in your home is low due to our safety and management procedures. Asbestos materials in your home are likely to be in good condition. We remediate or remove any materials that pose a significant risk to your health.



The government advises that if asbestos materials are in good condition, then it is safest to leave them where they are.

It is only when asbestos materials are damaged or disturbed that they become hazardous. If you carry out any DIY jobs such as sanding or drilling, you could potentially release asbestos fibres into the air. You must ask your neighbourhood housing officer for approval prior to undertaking DIY works that could disturb asbestos in your home.

If you think the asbestos materials in your home have been disturbed or are degrading it is vital you contact us. This will allow us to evaluate and manage the risk to ensure your continued safety.



We have a duty to manage, not remove, asbestos in your home.

The asbestos register

We maintain an asbestos register that records the location and condition of asbestos-containing materials (ACM's) or materials which are presumed to contain asbestos. The asbestos register is periodically reviewed and monitored.

We have an asbestos management plan that sets out in detail how the risks from these materials will be managed.

If asbestos-containing materials need to be sealed, encapsulated, or removed, a competent, licensed contractor will be used to carry out the works.

Advice and guidance

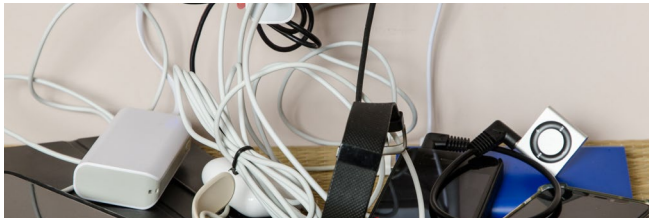
If an area known to contain asbestos materials is damaged, then we will either remove it or encapsulate the affected area so that it no longer poses a risk to your health.



If you think you may have damaged asbestos materials in your home do not attempt to clean it up yourself. Stop whatever you are doing and contact us immediately. Try to avoid moving debris around and leave any tools or equipment that you have been using. Do not use a domestic vacuum cleaner as this can make the situation worse.



Did you know that the latency period for asbestos related illnesses can take anything from 10 to 50 years to show symptoms.



It is vital to look after your electrical equipment. Electric shocks and fires caused by electrical faults are a major cause of injury and can be fatal.

Simple checks can save your life

Cables

- check cables for damage - there should not be any cuts or frays
- be careful not to overload extension cables
- make sure extension cables are fully uncoiled whilst using
- do not daisy chain extension cables

Plugs

- plugs should fit tightly into sockets
- plug casings should not be cracked or chipped
- do not use a plug if it has burn marks or signs of damage

Sockets

- check sockets for burn marks and signs of overheating
- make sure sockets are properly secured to the wall and not loose
- make sure the socket switches work properly

Chargers

Different devices require different levels of charge. Branded chargers are specifically designed for a particular device. Fake chargers are often made with poor quality components that fail to meet UK safety regulations.

Fake chargers run the risk of putting too much energy into a device, causing the battery to overheat. This means they can cause injury, electric shocks, and even fires.

Top tips for electrical safety

- make sure your electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark
- regularly empty fluff and lint from tumble dryers
- switch off appliances when not in use
- hair dryers and straighteners can get extremely hot – leave them to cool on a heatproof surface after use
- do not use an extension lead for high powered appliances like washing machines
- remember that water and electricity are a deadly mix – do not use mains-powered appliances like hairdryers, straighteners, or radios in the bathroom
- regularly clean your oven and hob to avoid a build up of food debris which poses a fire risk
- check your childrens' chargers and electrical equipment regularly to make sure it is in good condition
- register your white goods – it could save your life if a product is recalled for safety reasons. You can check for product recalls here: www.whitegoodsafety.com/product-recalls

[For more information on electrical safety around the home](#)



Remember: Just because it works does not mean it is safe!



You must have our permission before any electrical work is carried out in your home.

We recommend using an electrician registered with a competent persons scheme to make sure work is carried out safely and to a high standard. Schemes include:

- NAPIT (National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers)
- NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting)
- ELECSA
- STROMA

Charging electric bikes, electric scooters, and mobility scooters

E-bikes and e-scooters can pose safety risks if used and charged incorrectly.

If you own an e-bike, e-scooter, or mobility scooter, always follow the guidance for charging safely as most fires occur whilst charging. Charge batteries on a hard, flat surface. Store your e-bike or e-scooter in your property on a flat, non-flammable surface near a smoke or heat alarm.



E-bikes, e-scooters, and mobility scooters must be stored and charged in your home and not in communal areas. They should never block an emergency exit.

Top tips for keeping safe whilst charging e-bikes, e-scooters, and mobility scooters at home

- always follow manufacturers' instructions when charging
- never leave the device unattended whilst charging
- only charge your device when you are at home and awake - avoid charging when you are asleep
- always unplug your charger once it has finished charging your device
- always use a charger approved by the product manufacturer and buy an official one from a reputable seller
- be cautious buying batteries from online marketplaces as they may not meet the correct safety standards
- do not attempt to modify or tamper with the battery. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions
- check the battery for damage before charging. If there is any damage, do not use it
- do not dispose of lithium-ion batteries in general household or recycling waste. Batteries can be taken to your [re-use and recycling centre](#)
- do not use electrical power points in communal areas to charge any personal items



Make sure you have home contents insurance. If there is a fire in your home and your belongings are lost or damaged, it is your responsibility to replace them.



Fire safety at home

We are doing all that we can to keep you and your home safe from the devastating effects of fire, and you can help too.

Smoke alarms

London Fire Brigade recommend you test your smoke alarms once a month. You can do this yourself by holding the button on the alarm for up to 5 seconds.

If your smoke alarm goes off by mistake, wait for it to stop. Do not take out the batteries or cover the smoke alarm – it is in place for your safety. Most fire alarms are now designed so the battery cannot be removed, please do not attempt to remove it as this will damage the detector.

If you find that your alarm is not working, please contact us.

Top tips for keeping safe at home

Fires are more likely to start at home than anywhere else. Here are some useful tips that you can use to ensure your home and communal areas of your building stay as safe as possible.

In the kitchen

- when using the hob, keep your saucepan handles turned in so they do not get knocked off. If you need to leave the room take your pans off the heat
- keep tea towels and cloths away from your cooker and be careful if you are wearing loose clothing
- if you are cooking with oil and it catches fire, never use water on it as it will cause a fireball. If you can, turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or damp towel
- switch off all non-essential appliances at night and when you are not at home
- keep your oven, oven hood filters, and hob clean and free of grease and food debris as this can quickly ignite and cause a fire



Never put yourself at any risk and if doubt, get out.

Keeping children safe

- do not let children play with electrical items. Use plug guards in sockets and unplug appliances that children could trip over
- keep matches, lighters, and candles out of sight and reach of children
- always use a childproof fire guard, and do not let children play or leave toys near a fire or heater
- take care when cooking - never leave children alone in the kitchen
- make sure your evacuation route is clear of any toys or pushchairs which may block it
- keep doors closed at night
- discuss the importance of fire safety with your children

Using portable heaters safely

- do not put anything on top of heaters and never use it to dry your clothes
- keep your heater away from bedding, curtains, and furniture
- never leave your heater unattended whilst in use or when you are asleep
- never power a heater from an extension lead
- do not leave young children or pets unattended in areas where portable heaters are switched on
- keep portable heaters in a safe place, both when they are being used and when they are being stored

Cigarettes

- do not smoke in your property - always find an outside space away from the stairwells or building to smoke. Never smoke in bed
- do not leave lit cigarettes, cigars, or pipes lying around
- stub cigarettes out properly, ensuring they are fully extinguished and disposed of appropriately
- keep matches and lighters out of reach of children



Buildings with multiple flats

Communal areas

If you live in a building with multiple flats, communal areas including entrances, stairwells, corridors, landings, and service cupboards must be kept clear of personal belongings.

In the event of a fire, items in communal areas can fuel a fire, block important escape routes, and obstruct firefighter access to emergency equipment.



Follow London Fire Brigade guidance by clearing any items that you may have outside your home, in communal areas, or in service cupboards, including:

- bikes including e-bikes
- pushchairs
- mobility scooters or e-scooters
- shoes or shoe racks
- plants and other decorations including picture frames, posters, Christmas or other religious decorations
- furniture, including white goods
- household rubbish
- laundry
- candles or candle holders
- doormats



Highly flammable items like barbeques, gas cylinders, petrol, diesel, or oil cans must not be stored anywhere in the building.

Know your emergency plan

If you live in a building with multiple flats, make sure you know your buildings evacuation policy. You can find Fire Action Notices by the main entrances and exits of the building telling you what to do in the event of a fire.



If a fire breaks out in your home

No matter what the evacuation policy for your building, if there is a fire in your home, you must leave immediately and call the fire service.

- leave the room where the fire is straight away and close the door behind you. Do not attempt to put the fire out
- tell everyone in your flat to leave. Do not stop to collect personal belongings
- close your flat entrance door behind you
- leave the building by following the emergency exit signage
- keep a safe distance away from the building and dial 999 for the fire service. Emergency service calls are free of charge
- give your full address to the fire service. Do not end the call until the fire service has repeated the address correctly. You may also need to give your telephone number
- do not assume someone else has called 999. If you see a fire, make the call

Balcony safety

If you have a balcony and a fire breaks out, it could spread much faster than a fire inside your building. This is because inside buildings there are walls and doors that help to contain fires, as well as a more limited supply of oxygen to keep the fire burning. Outside on your balcony, a fire can quickly be blown by the wind, spreading it upwards and outwards and putting flats around you at risk.

We want you to be able to enjoy your balcony safely during the summer months when the weather is nice. Generally, the less you have on your balcony the more fire safe you will be.

Tips to keep your balcony safe

- a suitable table and chairs are fine. Remember, some types of plastic furniture will melt in the event of a fire
- keeping your balcony clear of rubbish will help prevent the starting and spreading of fires
- do not dispose of rubbish or cigarettes by flicking them over the side of your balcony. [Need help giving up smoking?](#)

What is NOT allowed on my balcony?

- flammable items like timber, paint, gas cylinders, petrol, diesel or oil cans
- fireworks
- outdoor gas or electric patio heaters or a flame pits
- barbeques must not be used on balconies as falling embers can burn items on your balcony and other balconies around you
- white goods and electrical goods such as fridges or tumble driers are not designed for outdoor use and could easily start a devastating fire
- reed fencing or other combustible screening



Fire doors are one of the most important measures to keep you safe. They create a barrier from fire and smoke to prevent them from travelling through a building. Controlling the spread of fire and smoke is vital to allow residents to evacuate or stay put as instructed and enable safe access for the fire brigade.

We inspect all fire doors, but it is important that you know what fire doors should look like and how they are meant to function so you can report anything that is not right. Fire doors only work if installed correctly and if important parts are intact and performing as they should.

Where will I see fire doors in my building?

If you live in a building with multiple flats, you will find fire doors in stairwells, corridors, and anywhere there is a risk of combustion, like electricity service cupboards and riser cupboards. Fire doors in common areas around the building will have blue signage showing they are fire doors.

What about my front door?

If you live in a building with multiple flats, it is likely your flat entrance door is also a fire door. Flat entrance doors face onto a means of escape. It is vital that flat entrance doors are regularly inspected and maintained to make sure they work properly if a fire breaks out. Flat entrance doors should never be adapted or replaced.

Please note that fire doors are not required where the door opens directly onto a street.

How do I know a fire door is safe?

Here are some important things to look out for to be confident that a fire door will work properly in the event of a fire.

Door closers

Make sure the door closes firmly onto the latch without sticking. Doors should open and close easily.



WHY? A fire door only works when it is closed. If a self-closing device is damaged or disengaged, the door might not work when it is needed.

Seals

Make sure there are intumescent seals around the door or frame and that they are in good condition.



WHY? Seals will trap the smoke and stop fire travelling around the door.

Hinges

Check there are 3 hinges on the door with no loose or missing screws.



WHY? Hinges should hold the weight of the door. Only a properly fitted door will help prevent the spread of fire and smoke.

Gaps

Fire doors should fit snugly in their frames. Gaps must be less than 4mm on the sides and at the top and up to 8mm below the door.



WHY? Smoke and fire can travel through any gaps.

Glass panels

If there are door with glass panels they should be in good condition with no cracks or missing glass.



WHY? Broken or missing glass impacts the integrity of the door.

Letterboxes

Letterboxes should be made of a solid metal or certified fire-resistant material. They should not be made of aluminium. Solid metals will be magnetic whereas aluminium will not be.



WHY? Broken or damaged letterplates impact the integrity of the door.

I am a leaseholder – what are my responsibilities?

As a leaseholder, the flat entrance door to your home is the council's responsibility under law however it is your responsibility to maintain the door.

Gas safety checks

As your landlord, we are legally required to make sure that all gas appliances and associated pipework provided by us at your property, are checked once a year and are safe to use.

If you have a gas cooker or hob, we will carry out a visual inspection. If you have a gas fire, we will check the flue. Even if you do not have a gas cooker or boiler, we will still arrange for an inspection if there is a gas supply to your property.

Within 90 days of your gas safety check being due, our contractor will write to you with an appointment date. If the time is unsuitable for you, you can contact them to rearrange. Our contractor is flexible with evening appointment slots and Saturday appointments. Our contractor will attempt to contact you until a gas safety check has been completed.

We will also contact you if you have not made an appointment within 60 days of your gas safety check being due.



As part of your tenancy agreement with us, you must allow access for our contractors to complete these checks.

It is important for your safety and the safety of others in the building that we carry out a gas safety check. For this reason, we will commence legal proceedings against residents who do not allow us carry out this important check. You could be liable for legal costs in the region of £1500.

Why are gas safety checks important?

Unchecked properties risk a gas explosion or carbon monoxide poisoning.

You could be at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if:

- an appliance is faulty or not properly installed
- a room containing a gas appliance is poorly ventilated
- chimneys or flues become blocked

If your home has a carbon monoxide (CO2) alarm, remember to test it weekly so you know the sound.

You can report heating and hot-water repairs in between servicing to T Brown by calling 0208 786 1200.

Gas meters

Gas meters are your energy supplier's responsibility. We are unable to carry out repairs to your gas meter. You will need to contact your supplier instead. If you do not know who your supplier is, you can find out by calling 0870 608 1524.

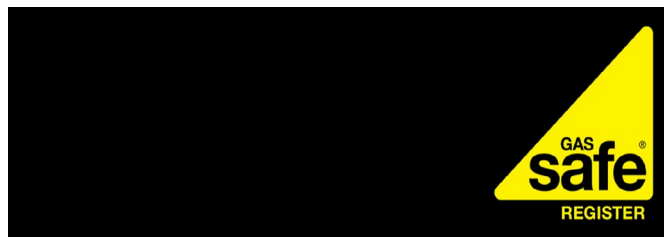
What to do if you smell gas

If you smell gas or suspect a leak you should immediately:

1. put out all naked flames such as candles
2. do not turn electrical appliances or switches on or off
3. open all doors and windows
4. switch off your gas supply by pulling the gas lever down. This should be located next to or near your gas meter
5. leave the property and call the National Grid on 0800 111 999

The Gas Safe Register

All our contractor's engineers are on the Gas Safe Register. This organisation makes sure that gas engineers are properly qualified and work to high standards of safety. By law, all gas engineers must be on the Gas Safe Register. We do not service tenants' own appliances but if our engineer suspects an appliance is faulty or defective, with your approval, it will be disconnected from the gas supply as a safety precaution. Make sure that if you are arranging for your own repairs that any engineer you use is on the Gas Safe Register.



As your landlord, we carry out thorough checks of water systems to make sure water is safe for you to use and does not contain legionella.

What is legionella?

Legionella is a type of bacteria found in stagnant water. Legionella bacteria is generally not harmful in low concentrations. However, if it develops in your home water system it can cause a bacterial infection such as legionnaire's disease.

Am I at risk?

The risk of contracting legionnaire's disease is very low, however, certain residents will be at greater risk. The risk categories are:

- those aged over 45
- smokers and heavy drinkers
- those with chronic respiratory or kidney disease
- those with diabetes, lung, or heart disease
- those with an impaired immune system



If you breathe in tiny droplets of water containing legionella bacteria this will cause the infection. You cannot get legionnaire's disease by drinking water containing legionella bacteria or from people who have the infection.

Water safety checks

We carry out water risk assessments (WRA's) for those with shared water storage. The frequency of these assessments are determined by risk.

- in sheltered housing and hostel sites with vulnerable tenants, either with or without stored water, assessments are conducted every 2 years
- in buildings without vulnerable people and fed via stored water or water tanks, assessments are conducted every 3 years
- buildings without vulnerable people and fed via incoming main water without stored water or water tanks, assessments are conducted every 5 years

We also carry out an annual clean, disinfection and legionella sampling of the water tanks.

If your home does not have a stored water installation there is a lower risk.

How can I prevent legionella?

Legionella bacteria grows in stagnant water. If your home has been vacant for more than 1 week, we recommend the following to reduce the risk:

- run the hot water tap for a minimum of 60 seconds
- remove the showerhead and run water for at least 10 minutes
- flush the toilet twice to circulate fresh water

Other things you can do:

- clean showerheads every 3 to 6 months
- avoid hanging damp dishcloths over taps





Get in touch with us

If you are a council tenant or leaseholder and you need to report something to us, email us at buildingsafety@ealing.gov.uk



London Fire Brigade

Call 999 in the event of a fire
www.london-fire.gov.uk



Useful websites

[Asbestos](#)

[Electrical product recalls](#)

[NAPIT](#)

[NICEIC](#)

[E-scooters and e-bikes safety](#)

[General electrical safety](#)

[LFB home fire safety visit](#)

[Gas safe register](#)

[HSE - what is legionnaires](#)

[NHS - legionnaires disease](#)