

5. ASBESTOS

What is it?

Asbestos is a fibrous material used in some buildings mainly for its strength and fire resistant properties. Using asbestos as a building material was banned in the UK in 1999, so any property built before 2000 may contain it.

What's the risk?

Left alone asbestos doesn't pose a risk to health, however when disturbed, fibres can be inhaled and could lead to severe lung conditions. The fibres are often released if part of the building containing asbestos is damaged by carrying out general household improvements like drilling, scraping and sanding etc.



How do we manage the risk?

Our properties have been surveyed and we maintain a record of the location, type and risk of materials containing asbestos.

If the material is sealed, in good condition and unlikely to be damaged we will leave it alone, however where there is any damage we will take appropriate action.

If the damage is minor we will reseal the area, but if it is extensive we will have the asbestos removed by licensed contractors.

What should you know and do about the risk?

Asbestos is only a risk when it is damaged or moved without being first made safe. Please do not drill, sand, scrape or cut into a wall or surface you think may contain asbestos without speaking to us first. **Most importantly, do not touch any damaged asbestos.**



Safety in your home



Should you require any further information on Safety in Your Home:

Contact us

Website: www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk

Email: info@stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk

Telephone: 01782 968566 (9am to 5pm Mon to Fri)

This leaflet contains important information. Please take the time to read it. If you need help understanding the information or need more specific advice please contact us on 01782 968566.

Your safety is the most important thing to us.

As a landlord it is also a legal requirement for us to carry out certain regular safety checks on your home.

This leaflet provides information on the "Big 5" property related risks that you might come across. Whilst we manage a lot of other risks we wanted to make you aware of the most significant and how you can help us to deal with them.

Stoke on Trent Housing Society, or a contractor working on our behalf will always book an appointment with you to carry out any essential safety checks.

Where possible we will do what we can to make sure that these appointments are convenient for you. However you should be aware that your tenancy agreement states that you must allow the Society's staff and contractors access to your home to carry out repairs or inspections.

Where you have not let us in to your home to carry out these safety checks, we may ask the court for an Injunction Order to allow us to enter your home. We would also ask the court to make an order against you for any court costs.



Please help us to keep you safe.

4. WATER SAFETY (Legionella)

What is it?

Legionella is a naturally occurring bacteria which is present in places like rivers and ponds. In the natural environment it will not cause any problems, however it can become a significant risk in certain conditions within building water supplies. If enough of the bacteria is breathed in it can cause a severe lung disease called 'Legionnaires' disease, which can be fatal.

The bacteria legionella can develop within building water systems like cooling towers, evaporative condensers, spas, showers etc.



What's the risk?

Legionella bacteria can become a significant risk if:

- Water temperature is between 20 and 45 degrees C
- There are food sources in the water system, such as scale, sludge and rust
- The water is stagnant or recirculated
- People breathe in fine airborne water droplets (aerosol)

Anyone can develop Legionnaires' disease but the risks are increased for those who smoke or have existing health problems.

How do we manage the risk?

We regularly assess the risks of legionella bacteria spreading in our communal water systems. The water systems that we feel present a risk are inspected, treated, cleaned and monitored on a regular basis by a specialist water testing company.

What should you know and do about the risk?

There are a number of simple measures that you can take to reduce any risk from the water supply in your home:

- If you have been away from your home for an extended period you may want to run your shower and taps for a minute or so to flush out any stagnant water
- Regularly clean your taps to prevent the build up of lime scale, which bacteria can grow on
- Clean and descale showerheads and hoses thoroughly every 2 or 3 months
- **Give us access** if we need to come and test your water supply at any time

3. GAS SAFETY



Gas central heating is provided in a number of the Society's homes.

Where gas is installed we are legally required to ensure that an annual safety check is completed on each appliance and flue and we must keep a record of these checks.

What's the risk?

As well as leaks, gas can contribute to fires and create explosions. Less obvious is the risk caused from carbon monoxide poisoning, a toxic gas that is odourless, colourless and tasteless. If it is not ventilated it can prevent the body from absorbing oxygen and cause death. It can escape from appliances like boilers and fires if they are not working properly.

How do we manage the risk?

We commission a gas safe registered contractor to inspect and test the gas systems in your home every year. After these tests we will provide you with a certificate which you must keep in a safe place.

If we come across any damage or fault with your gas system we will carry out the necessary repairs and if we can't fix the issue straight away we will make sure everything is safe before leaving the property. This could mean that our engineer may have to turn off the appliance until they can carry out a full repair.

Your responsibilities?

You must allow access for the gas safety check to be completed in your home and for any repairs that need doing. Failure to do this will result in the Society obtaining an Injunction Order to enter your home and you would have to pay the costs associated with obtaining this from the court.

If you suspect there is a gas leak call 0800 111 999.

If it is safe to do so, turn off the gas supply and open the windows. Do not smoke and do not switch on or off any electrical appliances or lights. You should also call the Society to inform us of the gas leak.

Never use a gas appliance if you think it is not working properly and never cover an appliance or block any air vents.

1. ELECTRICAL SAFETY



Stoke on Trent Housing Society is responsible for your safety in relation to electrical fixed wiring in your home.

What's the risk?

Faulty electrical supplies can cause serious injury or death, damaged or faulty equipment can lead to electric shocks, fires and explosions.

How do we manage this risk?

We have an ongoing programme of checks and maintenance of communal electrical supplies as well as those in your home. If we spot any damaged or faulty systems we will carry out the required repairs.

We will respond to any reports of damaged or faulty supplies and we may need to turn off some or all power if we cannot make it safe on the first visit. We will always repair the supply as soon as possible. In some cases we may need to prioritise repairs in the homes of more vulnerable residents.

Your responsibilities?

You must allow access for the safety check to be completed in your home and for any repairs that need doing.

You are also responsible for your own electrical appliances and its important to maintain them, making sure that they are undamaged. If you think that any electrical items in your home are damaged then you should contact a professional electrician for advice. Please do not carry out your own electrical repairs.

If you think a socket in your property or an electrical supply in a communal area is damaged or faulty please tell us straight away. We will inspect the fault and make any repairs necessary.

Never overload your sockets and make sure that your cooker is fitted correctly and by a qualified electrician (we may ask to see a certificate to prove this).

To be automatically alerted if any manufacturer issues a recall or safety notice on your appliances register your electrical goods at:

registermyappliance.org.uk

2. FIRE SAFETY

Stoke on Trent Housing Society has a legal duty in relation to fire safety. We:

- Complete fire safety checks of the communal areas of apartment schemes on a weekly basis
- Commission regular independent Fire Risk Assessments of all of our schemes
- Liaise with the relevant enforcing authorities in respect of fire safety



How we manage the risk?

Our properties are designed to minimise risk of a fire starting, and if one does occur it will slow down the spread of fire.

We do continuous assessments of fire risks to decrease the chances of fires starting in communal areas and to make sure that precautions are in place to guarantee residents' safety if there is a fire. It is our responsibility to maintain and, when necessary, repair these controls e.g. fire doors.

What should you know and do about the risks?

Know the fire safety plan for your building and what actions to take if there is a fire in your home or anywhere in the building. You can find fire safety information posted in the corridors of our schemes and in the information provided to you when you moved in. If you don't have this information please get in touch with the Society.

To prevent the risk of fire it is important that you do the following:

- Test your smoke alarms weekly. Contact us if they aren't working.
- Keep fire doors closed at all times and escape routes clear of obstructions
- Remember to switch off and unplug all electrical equipment not in use
- Do not store aerosols on windows or near heat sources and never leave burning candles unattended.
- Only smoke in designated areas. If you smoke in your property make sure you dispose of smoking materials safely, and never smoke in bed.
- When cooking, keep an eye on any hot surfaces or flames. Chip pans are particularly dangerous, use a deep fat fryer instead.
- NEVER put water on a chip pan or oil fire, it will explode. Instead turn off the cooker and cover the pan with a damp tea towel or preferably a fire blanket.
- Never put water on an electrical fire as this could result in a fatal electric shock. If any electrical items are faulty do not use them.

What should you do in the event of a fire?

All of our apartment schemes operate a policy of “**stay put**”. This means that should you discover a fire in your home:

- Leave the room where the fire is straightaway and close the door
- Tell everyone in your home and get them to leave
- Close your front door behind you as you leave
- Do not stay behind to put the fire out
- If there is a lift - do not use it
- Wait outside away from the building and call the fire service – dial 999

If you see or hear of a fire in another part of the building:

- The building is designed to contain a fire in the apartment where it starts. This means it will usually be safe for you to stay in your own home if the fire is elsewhere
- You must leave immediately if smoke or heat affects your home or if you are told by the fire service to do so
- If there is a lift - do not use it
If you are in any doubt - get out and call the fire service – dial 999

General advice

You should have an escape route planned that everyone at your address is familiar with. As you escape remember:

- ◇ Don't delay to save valuables or to investigate the fire
- ◇ Crawl on the floor if there's smoke - the air is cleaner near the floor
- ◇ As you leave only open the doors you need to and close any open doors you can to slow the spread of fire
- ◇ Before you open doors feel them with the back of your hand, if they're warm don't open them as this means the fire is on the other side
- ◇ Where there is a stay put policy, place wet towels at the bottom of doors
- ◇ Keep your escape route free from hazards and obstructions
- ◇ Don't go back in, if there is someone still inside wait for the Fire Brigade to arrive and tell them

Visit from the Fire Service

If you would like a home fire safety assessment please get in touch with your local fire service who will be happy to give you free advice.

If you think that there is a fault with a fire door or a problem with fire precautions in shared or communal areas please let us know