



**pace**  
property professionals

# Safety and Communal Living

## Guidance for Tenants

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# Reporting Problems

We visit properties we own or manage every 6 to 12 months but we need your help keeping an eye on issues and reporting new problems as they arise.

You will also have been given our Tenant Information Pack which is an useful guide, also full of helpful information. Please contact us if you require another copy.

## HOW TO REACH US?

Email us at [pm@pace-properties.com](mailto:pm@pace-properties.com) or telephone 01702 445 600.

### WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

**Please don't simply email urgent matters – we can't see every email as it comes in.**

If something happens out of hours and needs emergency attention such as a leak or break in to a communal door please telephone 01702 445 600 and listen to the out of hours message and follow the instructions. During the day call the office.

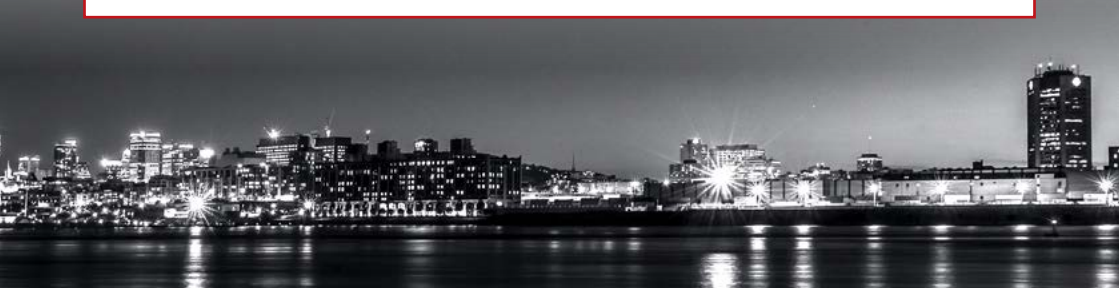
If it's a non-urgent matter, please send us an email and the appropriate person will get back to you as soon as they can.

### WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE

There should be a sign in your communal area telling you what to do in the event of a fire. Please read it and follow the instructions. If there is conflicting information or no signage, please let us know urgently.

**In the event of a fire in your own property, you should phone 999 and leave the property closing all doors and windows behind you.**

It is important to keep communal areas completely clear of belongings to ensure they remain fire safe areas. We know this can be inconvenient, but making sure you and your neighbours can get out safely in a fire is important.



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Please find below some guidance we'd like to share with you to reduce common problems we find reported by tenants. If you've got any additions to this list, we'd love to hear them.

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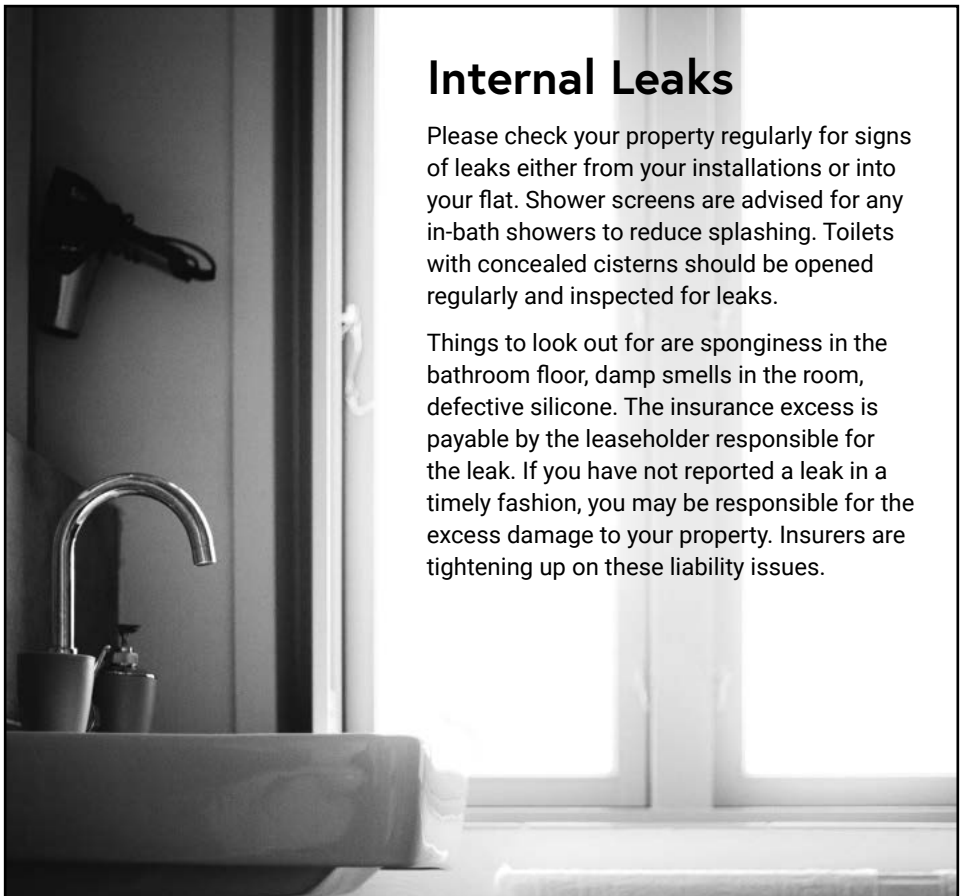
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## Internal Leaks

Please check your property regularly for signs of leaks either from your installations or into your flat. Shower screens are advised for any in-bath showers to reduce splashing. Toilets with concealed cisterns should be opened regularly and inspected for leaks.

Things to look out for are sponginess in the bathroom floor, damp smells in the room, defective silicone. The insurance excess is payable by the leaseholder responsible for the leak. If you have not reported a leak in a timely fashion, you may be responsible for the excess damage to your property. Insurers are tightening up on these liability issues.

# Electrical Safety

**The block owner/freeholder or Right to Manage company is only responsible for fire safety in the communal area. Landlords and tenants both have responsibilities for the situation inside the flat.**

Here are some things to consider:

## WIRING

Your landlord should be aware that as of 1st April 2021 all rented properties must have passed an electrical safety check (EICR). If your landlord or letting agent contacts you to arrange a time for an electrical safety inspection, please co-operate in arranging the relevant appointment. It is for everyone's safety in the block as well as your own.

Visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electrical-safety-standards-in-the-private-rented-sector-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities/guide-for-landlords-electrical-safety-standards-in-the-private-rented-sector>



## PORTABLE APPLIANCES

The fire at Grenfell Tower was started by a faulty fridge. Have you ever had your portable appliances tested to ensure they are safe? If you use a fridge, washing machine, microwave etc or have any plugged in wall heaters in your flat, consider having them checked annually. This is called a PAT test and whilst not a legal requirement we feel everyone in living in flats should PAT test their appliances.

Visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electrical-safety-standards-in-the-private-rented-sector-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities/guide-for-landlords-electrical-safety-standards-in-the-private-rented-sector>

# Fire Safety

## SMOKE ALARMS

Your landlord has a legal responsibility to ensure you have working smoke alarms in your property at the beginning of any new tenancy agreement.

If you discover you have a problem with your smoke alarm during your tenancy, please report it to your landlord or letting agency immediately. Ideally, your smoke alarms should also be checked during each routine property visit by your landlord or letting agent.

Smoke alarms inside your flat must never be removed, covered or disabled. This is extremely dangerous and puts you, your neighbours and the whole building at risk.

If you believe your smoke alarm is faulty, please report it immediately to your landlord or letting agent so it can be repaired.

Tampering with safety equipment may result in enforcement action.



## FLAT FIRE DOORS

If the door of your flat leads onto an enclosed communal area (i.e. a hallway shared with other flats) then it is considered a fire door and needs to be fire safe. This is because the communal area is usually the way that everyone exits the building in a fire. If there is a fire in your flat, you should exit, close the door and phone 999. The smoke will then stay in the flat long enough for the fire to be put out or your neighbours to also evacuate. In very small blocks, you should also let your neighbours know there is a fire.

- UPVC doors are never fire safe.
- Door furniture (hinges etc) should be fire safe (it should say that on them)
- Gaps between the door and frame, and around the frame should be less than 4mm (except potentially at the bottom of the door, where the gap should be as small as practicable allowing for uneven floors).
- There should be an overhead self-closer that must never be tampered with or removed as they ensure the door shuts automatically in the event of a fire. If a fire spreads because a fire door did not close properly, it can endanger lives and cause severe damage.
- Most doors will have intumescent strips and smoke seals too. These are furry strips that go around the edge of the door and melt to cause a seal in a fire. They shouldn't have any gaps in, should stick out evenly and be generally in good condition.

Please follow these instructions for your fire door:

- Fire doors should be kept shut when not in use
- Do not remove or obstruct the self-closing devices (if they are heavy/stiff/too fast tell us and we will have them adjusted)
- Tenants should report any faults or damage to fire doors immediately to their landlord or letting agent

Watch this video to see how quickly disaster can strike.

<https://www.pace-properties.com/fire-safety> or <https://youtu.be/8VZx8weWytI>

## FIRE DOORS WITHIN FLATS

If you live in shared accommodation (also called a bedsit/ HMO), or in flats with certain lay outs, other doors in your flat may also be fire doors. They should have a sign on them saying “Fire Door Keep Shut” and you should follow the rules above about how to use them.

## BALCONIES / TERRACES

All occupants with balconies need to be aware of appropriate use regulations. Insurers and most leases say that balconies must not be used for anything that could cause a fire – such as BBQs, fire works, patio heaters. Also please don't store combustible items on balconies. If you believe that your tenancy permits this please get in touch specifically to get permission in writing.

## VISITORS

If you have guests, please ensure they know the fire evacuation procedure for your building and the location of the nearest escape routes.

## Rubbish

**If the wheelie-bin has a lid, please close the lid in order to keep rodents and pests away and to ensure the bin's contents are isolated in the event of a fire.**



## HOW TO DISPOSE OF BULK RUBBISH

Please do not place bulk rubbish in the communal bin areas. The council will not simply clear bulk waste from flats. You should phone your local council who will arrange a collection. If we have to clear it on your behalf, you will still have to pay the charge. It will also be more expensive as we will use a commercial contractor and you will also be liable for our reasonable administration fees for dealing with it.

You should not put rubbish outside in bags except on the morning of collection. If you need to store rubbish outside and have a designated area, you may need to buy a suitable bin. It's not your landlord's responsibility to provide a bin for your outside use, but there may be restrictions on where you can put it. If you live in a large block of flats, there should already be communal arrangements in place. Please let us know if you have any queries.

Each local council has its own rules and you will need to familiarise yourself with the rules that are appropriate to where you live. Here are the links for the major areas we cover.

**Southend Council:** <https://www.southend.gov.uk/recycling-waste-0/recycling-southend>

**Basildon Council:** <https://www.basildon.gov.uk/article/4784/Rubbish-and-recycling>

**Castlepoint Council:** <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/recycling&a=1>

# Communal Area Safety

## Please do not store anything in the communal areas of flats.

These are fire safe areas. If there is a fire and it is dark and smoky, you or a neighbour might not be able to get passed an object such as a bike or a pram. It is particularly dangerous to put items that may catch fire in communal areas such as old fridges, paint or motorbikes but that's not to say non-flammable items are acceptable. Communal areas must be kept clear. **Please see separate section on ebikes**



Be safe and considerate  
– keep items  
such as a bike  
in your room if  
necessary

## No smoking or vaping in communal areas.

It is against the law to smoke in the communal areas of flats. If you wish to smoke outside the block, please do so at a respectful distance from the entrance and take your properly extinguished cigarette butt with you. If left on the floor or thrown down a drain they can take up to 10 years to degrade; they are full of chemicals that remain in pipework and can leach into the water systems and soil, presenting a serious threat to people and the environment.

Please also do not vape inside the communal areas as the smell and gasses are unpleasant and possibly a health risk for other people. Additionally, batteries within vapes can explode. Here is a link to a US government website explaining how you can help prevent this: <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/products-ingredients-components/tips-help-avoid-vape-battery-or-fire-explosions>

## Please do not let people into the building you don't know.

If there is a buzzer system, and a tradesperson rings your bell and you are not expecting someone, do not let them in. The person who they are coming to see should let them in. Don't allow people you don't know to tailgate you into the building. If people are up to no good, getting through the communal door makes it much easier for them to break into a flat.

**IF YOU SEE A SUSPICIOUS PERSON IN THE BUILDING PHONE THE POLICE.**

# E-bikes and E-Scooters

We have seen an increased number of Ebikes being used in and around Southend.

## CHARGING YOUR E-BIKE

The majority of fires related to e-bikes have happened in homes. These fires are often caused when charging batteries. Please pay special attention to bike conversion kits. Do not attempt to modify or tamper with the battery. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## REDUCE THE RISK OF OVERHEATING

- Batteries can get warm during their use. Allow them to cool down before attempting to re-charge.
- Batteries should always be charged on hard flat surfaces where heat can dissipate.
- Batteries can also pose a risk if they have been damaged, so try to ensure they are not getting knocked around while in use or while being carried.
- Batteries should never be exposed to extremes of temperature.

## FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS

- Always follow manufacturers' instructions when charging
- Never leave it charging unattended or charge it while you are asleep.
- You should always make sure you unplug your charger once it's finished charging.
- Always use the correct charger for your batteries and buy any replacements from a reputable seller.

Please consider your own safety and that of others if you own and need to store an E-bike. Whilst we have already explained any sort of bike should be kept out of communal areas, if possible, E-bikes should be stored out of flats too. An outside, secure bicycle store would be the safest option.



E-scooters are illegal to ride on the road in the UK and should not be used in any block car parks or communal grounds. If you do have an E-scooter for use on other private land, please follow the same safety protocols recommended for E-bikes.

Please read the Government's Guide to Battery Safety for E-bikes for further detailed advice which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/battery-safety-for-e-cycle-users/battery-safety-for-e-cycle-users>

## Noise Nuisance in Flats

If you have a problem with noise from your neighbour, your first step is usually to talk to them to try and resolve the situation amicably. If there is a serious issue, you should immediately call the police. Please also notify us but we have limited powers.

For instance, the landlord of the flat making the nuisance, or the landlord of the block, can take legal action but this is a slow, expensive procedure and a last resort. They may not do it willingly either.

*You should also report it to the council, visit: <https://www.southend.gov.uk/xfp/form/14>*

We won't be able to take legal action without evidence such as police reference numbers or complaints logs. The council can help you with this.



# Pets in Flats

Many people enjoy the companionship that pets bring but living in a flat means being especially considerate of your neighbours and the shared environment. If you are thinking about keeping a pet, or already have one, please read the guidance below.

## CHECK WHETHER PETS ARE ALLOWED

Before bringing a pet into your home, please check the terms of your lease or tenancy agreement to confirm whether pets are permitted in your block.

Some buildings have strict “no pets” clauses, while others may allow certain animals with prior written permission. You should always ask your landlord for permission to have a pet in your home, however, consent should not be reasonably withheld. If you are unsure, please contact us and we will advise.

## AVOIDING NUISANCE

Pets should not cause a nuisance to other residents in the block. This includes:

- **Noise:** Persistent barking, scratching or other repetitive sounds can disturb neighbours living in close proximity. Please take steps to ensure your pet is settled and well-managed, especially if you are out for extended periods.
- **Odours:** Pet smells can easily travel through communal corridors and shared ventilation systems. Ensure your home and any pet bedding or litter trays are cleaned regularly.
- **Hygiene:** Pets must not foul in communal areas. Owners are responsible for clearing up after their pets immediately and keeping all shared spaces clean.

## COMMUNAL AREAS

**Animals should not roam freely in hallways, stairwells, gardens or other shared areas.**

Communal areas must remain clean, safe and accessible for everyone, and pets wandering unsupervised can cause distress or pose a hazard.

## ADEQUATE SPACE AND WELFARE

**Please make sure your flat is suitable for the type and size of pet you keep.**

Some animals require more space, stimulation or outdoor access than a flat can reasonably provide. Ensuring your pet’s welfare is essential and also helps prevent behaviours that may lead to nuisance.

## BEING A RESPONSIBLE NEIGHBOUR

**Flat living means being aware of how your pet may impact those around you.**

A well-cared-for animal, appropriate cleaning routines and prompt attention to any issues will help maintain a pleasant environment for everyone.

If you have any questions about pet permissions or responsibilities, please contact us and we will be happy to assist.

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