

# STAYING SAFE IN YOUR HOME GENERAL FIRE SAFETY

Freebridge Community Housing wants to work with our tenants to deliver a high performing housing service. This guide is intended to assist you to live comfortably and safely in your home, providing practical advice and tips about keeping safe and preventing fires. This advice also sets out the responsibility of both Freebridge and your own for preventing fire.

Although fire safety has been steadily improving in recent decades, many fires sadly remain preventable.

## Top tips

1. Never smoke in bed or whilst lying down. Always smoke when alert and if possible outside
2. Never leave cooking unattended or leave anything on top of your cooker
3. Take care with your clothing as loose sleeves and long clothing easily catch fire when cooking or if they're near heaters
4. Keep your exit routes and main walkways clear in your home
5. Do not use chip pans. Use a thermostatic fryer instead
6. Extinguish candles safely before going to bed and use appropriate holders. Do not place them on top of your TV
7. Keep all heating sources clear of clutter and take care near heaters
8. Close all doors whilst sleeping to prevent a fire spreading
9. Never leave items on charge overnight or for lengthy periods
10. Plug-in air fresheners can present a risk of fire and it is recommended that you do not use them
11. Ensure that your furniture has the fire resistant permanent label
12. Do not charge e-scooters or mobility scooters in your flats or close to flats. A fire could cause issues for your escape, or for others who live there





### **Did you know...?**

- You are around eight times more likely to die in a fire if you do not have any working smoke alarms
- Each year, cooking causes more accidental fires and fire-related injuries in the home than anything else
- Every six days someone dies in a fire started by smoking materials
- Faulty electrics cause about 4,000 fires in the home each year
- Two accidental dwelling fires are started by candles every day

**It's key to have your own exacuation plan in your home with your family and to understand and communicate the 'fire emergency strategy' that Freebridge advises for your building.**

## Our Responsibilities

We have a duty to ensure fire safety in the communal areas of our residential buildings.

The approach to tenant fire safety and best practice in terms of fire prevention is directly linked to the robust processes that Freebridge Community Housing have put in place to adhere to our statutory responsibilities.

These include;

- A knowledge of our buildings and the fire protection in place
- A programme of annual Fire Risk Assessments of communal areas conducted by an external contractor
- A regular programme of testing and servicing smoke alarms in homes and communal areas
- Partnership working with Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service as specialists in respect of Fire Safety for customer visits, training and campaigns
- Compliance with all relevant legislation



## Your Responsibilities

We all have a responsibility to minimise fire risk and to take reasonable steps to ensure fire safety during our day-to-day activities. By responding positively and embracing fire prevention, particularly in blocks of flats, we all have a crucial role to play in reducing the number of fire related incidents.

### Your Tenancy Agreement

The Freebridge Tenancy Agreement highlights the obligations and responsibilities of customers in relation to potential fire risk and prevention.

In relation to the use of a home and use of communal areas the tenancy agreement states that you are:

- Not to store flammable or explosive material in your home, other than items stored for normal household use
- To report to us promptly any repair or defect for which we are responsible in your home or the common areas
- To allow our employees or contractors acting on our behalf access, at reasonable times and subject to reasonable notice, to inspect the condition of your home or any installations or to carry out repairs or other works to your home or adjoining property.
- Regardless of whether a caretaking or cleaning service is provided, to keep clean (together with other residents) communal areas (including stairs, landings, entrance halls, lifts, bins areas, communal paths and similar shared areas) and keep these areas tidy and free of litter, rubbish, obstruction and hazards.
- You are advised to insure the contents of your home, your possessions and, in particular, any items you are responsible for under this agreement (such as internal redecoration following fire, flood or similar)
- To inform us in writing, and if possible in advance, if you are, or expect to be, absent from your home for four weeks or more.

**For your safety please always allow us prompt access to your home to check and test your smoke detectors.**

## Smoke alarms and fire detection equipment

- Your home should have a working smoke alarm fitted on each floor. If not, let us know straight away and we will fit them for you.

### To maintain your alarm you should:

- Dust your smoke alarm regularly.
- Check your smoke alarm weekly to make sure it is working by pressing the test button.
- Replace the battery if the alarm bleeps for any reason other than smoke or fire in your home.
- Contact us if you have any problems with your smoke alarm.

### Do not:

- Remove a working battery from your smoke alarm.
- Paint over, deliberately damage, disconnect or remove the smoke alarm. It could cost you or your family your life.

## Own property – escape plan

You should always be aware of what you would do in the event of a fire.

Preparing and practising an escape plan will help to ensure that you and your family can escape safely if there is a fire;

### Do:

- Make sure all adults and older children in your home know where the door and window keys are kept.
- Make sure exits are kept clear.
- Identify a quick and easy route out of your home.
- Think of another route in case the first one is blocked.
- Make sure everyone living with you knows what to do in a fire.



## **If your home is in a block with others**

If you live in a flat, bedsit or apartments - Your property is designed to prevent fire spreading from flat to flat.

### **→ If the alarm sounds to say there is a fire in the communal areas or another property**

You should always:

- Stay in your home ensuring that your front door is closed, until you are told it is safe to leave or you are told to evacuate
- Move towards a window, so that you can be seen from the outside
- Get ready to be evacuated - for example by getting dressed, collect walking sticks, house keys
- Wait for the Senior Fire Officer to decide when to evacuate the building

### Do not:

- Use the lifts as these will not work while the fire alarm is sounding
- Let visitors through the communal door entry system unless they are emergency personnel needing to get into the building
- Leave your home until told that it is safe to do so
- Go out into the corridors to investigate or attempt to tackle the fire

→ If the Fire is in **your home or you are in a communal area** when the alarm sounds

You should always:

- Get out and stay out making sure you close the door behind you
- Give the Fire Officer accurate information when they arrive
- If you are in a communal area leave by the safest route and report to the assembly point
- Stay at the assembly point until the Senior Fire Officer tells you what to do next

Do Not:

- Do not waste time collecting valuables or personal possessions
- Attempt to fight a fire

**IF YOUR HOME IS NOT WITHIN THE MAIN BLOCK OF A SCHEME I.E. SEPARATE HOUSES, OR BUNGALOWS - You should always attempt to safely evacuate your home if the alarm sounds and there is a fire in your property.**

You should always:

- Get out and stay out making sure you close the door behind you
- Give the Fire Officer accurate information when they arrive
- If you are in a communal area leave by the safest route and report to the assembly point
- Stay at the assembly point until the Senior Fire Officer tells you what to do next



## Communal areas

It is important that the communal areas around your home are kept clear and free from rubbish or hazards at all times. Communal staircases, landings and corridors provide access for emergency services in the event of a fire and an escape route for the safe evacuation of residents.

Communal and fire doors to individual properties should not be wedged open, as they are important in preventing the spread of fire.

Items left in stairwells or corridors could become a hazard particularly in the event of a fire if the area was smoke filled or in darkness.

The following items should not be stored or placed in **enclosed** communal areas;

- Recycling boxes, bags or bins
- Furniture, tables, cupboards or chairs other than those supplied by Freebridge
- Door mats or carpets unless fitted or agreed by us
- Black bin bags and general rubbish
- Mobility scooters or other walking aids
- Bikes or motorbikes
- Prams, buggies or pushchairs
- Children's toys, bikes and scooters

Freebridge encourages residents to help us keep areas clear by reporting items left in communal areas.

It is also prohibited to smoke in common parts of domestic premises such as enclosed communal areas of a block.

## Fire prevention & safety advice

Fire Safety in your home is very important and we want you to be safe from the risk of fire. If you can smell or see smoke, call 999 immediately.

### What to do in the event of a fire

#### Do:

- Keep calm and leave immediately, closing all doors behind you.
- Crawl out at ground level if smoke is making it difficult for you to breathe. Smoke rises and breathing should be easier the closer you are to the ground.
- Check doors with the back of your hand before opening them. If it is warm, do not open it as there may be a fire on the other side.
- When safe to do so, raise the alarm by dialling 999, ask for the Fire and Rescue Service and tell them your location.
- Go to a place of safety outside and stay there and give the Fire Brigade information. Do not re-enter the building until told to do so by the Senior Fire Officer on the scene.

#### Do not:

- Waste time investigating what has happened or rescuing valuables.

If you are trapped by the fire or smoke try to take refuge in a room with a window or external door that isn't affected by fire or smoke and make sure you close the door behind you to delay the fire. If you can, place a wet piece of clothing or towel across the bottom of the door to prevent smoke getting in.

**Do Not Jump;** if there are two adults, one should go down first to assist children. The other should get into a secure position and then lower the children as far as possible down the outside wall before letting them drop. If you are above first-floor level, or due to your age or health cannot get out of the window, open the window and draw attention to yourself by shouting and by waving sheets or clothes. Wait until the emergency services arrive to rescue you.

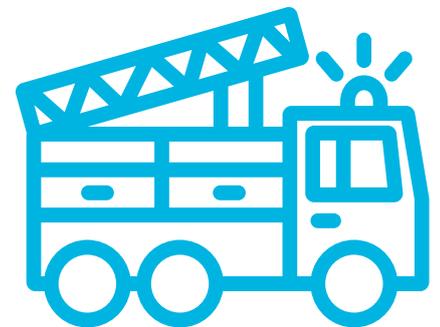
### → If your clothes catch fire Stop! Drop! And Roll!

#### Do:

- Lie down and roll around. It makes it harder for the fire to spread and may put out some of the flames.
- Smother the flames with a heavy material, like a coat or blanket. It will help deprive the fire of oxygen which it needs to keep burning.

#### Do not:

- Run around, it will make the flames worse.



## Around the home

Fire Safety in your home is very important and we want you to be safe from the risk of fire. If you can smell or see smoke, call 999 immediately.

### Kitchen

Chip pan fires cause one fifth of all accidental dwelling fires attended by the fire and rescue service in the UK each year. Nearly 20 people are killed or injured every day in accidental fires that start in their kitchen, the most common of these caused by deep fat frying. Given the considerable fire risk Freebridge encourages customers to choose oven chips or use a thermostatic fryer rather than a chip pan.

- The oil can not only cause terrible burns, but it can go up in flames
- At high temperatures an open chip pan provides an ideal fuel for a fire which is difficult to put out
- Chip pans can cause a fireball when left unattended or when heated to extremely high temperatures
- The safest way to deep fry is to use a thermostat controlled electric deep fat fryer. Its thermostat stops it from over overheating
- Don't take unnecessary risks by using an open chip pan
- Never try to put an oil pan fire out with water as it could just lead to the burning oil exploding over you and the kitchen



## When Cooking:

### Do:

- Keep matches and saucepan handles out of children's reach, and do not let saucepan handles stick out from the cooker where they could be easily knocked
- Take the pans off the heat or turn down the heat under the pans if you have to leave the kitchen whilst cooking
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker
- Use spark devices rather than matches or lighters to light gas cookers because they do not have a naked flame
- Double check the cooker is off when you have finished cooking
- Keep electrical leads and appliances away from water
- Keep toasters clean and away from curtains and kitchen rolls
- Keep your cooker clean and free from fat and grease

### Do not:

- Wear loose clothing when cooking as it could easily catch fire
- Put anything metal in the microwave
- Leave toasters unattended when cooking
- Never try to put an oil pan fire out with water as it could just lead to the burning oil exploding over you and the kitchen
- Take a burning saucepan outside as oxygen will feed the fire and make it worse

## Barbecue:

Barbecues present a significant risk of fire and risk to personal safety. Balconies on blocks of flats may seem an ideal place to relax during the summer but under no circumstances should they be used for barbecues due to the risk of falling embers, made worse by stronger wind speeds at height.

## Candles:

Candles in the home are popular for relaxation but are also responsible for an increasing number of accidents and should be handled with care.

- Always put candles on a heat resistant surface. Be especially careful with night lights and tea lights, which get hot enough to melt plastic. TVs are not fire-resistant objects
  - Put them in a proper holder. Candles need to be held firmly upright by the holder so they won't fall over. The holder needs to be stable too, so it won't fall over
  - Don't put candles near curtains or other fabrics – or furniture. And keep them out of draughts
  - Don't put them under shelves. It's easy to forget that there's a lot of heat above a burning candle. If you put it under a shelf or other surface then it can burn the surface. Make sure there's at least three feet (one metre) between a candle and any surface above it
- Keep clothes and hair away. If there's any chance you could lean across a candle and forget it's there, put it somewhere else
  - Candles should always be out of reach of children and pets
  - Keep candles apart. Leave at least four inches (10cm) between two burning candles
  - Take care with votive or scented candles. These kinds of candles turn to liquid to release their fragrance, so put them in a glass or metal holder
  - Don't move them when they're burning. Extinguish candles before moving them. Also, don't let anything fall into the hot wax, for example match sticks
  - Don't leave them burning. Extinguish candles before you leave a room. Never go to sleep with a candle still burning, and never leave a burning candle or oil burner in a child's bedroom
  - Use a snuffer or a spoon to put them out. It's safer than blowing them, which can send sparks and hot wax flying
  - **Double check they're out.** Candles that have been put out can go on smouldering and start a fire. Make sure they're completely out.



## Preventing electrical fires:

### Do:

- Always check that you use the right fuse to prevent your plug overheating
- Make sure your electrical appliances have the British or European safety mark
- Use one plug per socket rather than using adaptors or extension leads. High powered appliances such as washing machines should always have a single plug and plug socket to themselves
- Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order to prevent them causing a fire
- Look for signs of dangerous or loose wiring such as scorch marks, hot plugs and sockets, flickering lights, fuses that blow or circuit breakers that trip for no obvious reason
- Replace any old cables and leads
- Unplug appliances that you are not using
- Unplug electric blankets before going to bed if they do not have a thermostatic control for safe all night use
- Try to secure portable heaters up against a wall to stop them falling over
- Keep portable heaters away from curtains and furniture and never use them for drying clothes
- Replace electric blankets immediately if they show wear and tear.

### Do not:

- Overload an extension lead or adaptor. Check its limit for example an extension's limit may be 13 amp so you would not want to put 4 x 5 amp appliances, as this adds up to 20 amps
- Leave electric blankets folded as this damages the internal wiring. Store them flat or rolled up instead
- Buy second hand electric blankets
- Remove any fitted doors to create space as these should be closed at night to slow the spread of any fire that develops



## E-Scooters and E-Bikes:

When charging your e-scooter or e-bike, it's important to:

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions and always unplug your charger when its finished charging
- Ensure you have a working smoke alarm where you charge your e-bike or e-scooter
- Charge batteries whilst you are awake and alert. **Do not charge batteries overnight while you are asleep or away from home**
- Always use the approved manufacturers charger for the e-bike or e-scooter. Buy an official replacement charger from a reputable seller
- Do not cover chargers or battery packs when charging as this could lead to overheating
- Do not charge batteries or store your e-bike or e-scooter near combustibile or flammable materials
- Do not over charge the battery.
- Do not overload socket outlets or use inappropriate extension leads
- Please note residents aren't permitted to store or charge e-scooters and e-bikes in communal areas as any items left there can block emergency exit routes and create a fire risk



**IF YOU NEED ANY HELP TO UNDERSTAND  
THIS LEAFLET PLEASE GET IN TOUCH**

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**Out of Office Hours:**

The main telephone number (03332 404 444)  
will divert to our 24 hour emergency service.