

**WATERSIDE, KING'S LYNN**

# **STAYING SAFE IN YOUR FLAT**

## **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.

## **In the event of a fire, don't tackle it yourself**

### **Stay put**

**Stay put if the fire alarm sounds and the fire is not in your flat and you are in your own home.**

If you are in a communal area, you must evacuate to your fire assembly point. The Fire Notices in the communal areas reflect this.





### **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 evacuation 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. We take steps to prevent fires breaking out in the communal areas and to protect escape routes.

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;

- to undertake and review regular fire assessments of shared areas
- putting in place appropriate fire precautions to reduce the risk of fire in those areas
- ensuring suitable escape routes are available, kept clear and maintained to allow a safe exit from the building if necessary
- 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

A range of housing laws place additional responsibilities on landlords to ensure fire safety within the homes they let:

- to fit at least one smoke alarm on every floor of the home used as living accommodation and test them on the first day of each new tenancy
- to fit carbon monoxide alarms in all rooms that contain a solid fuel-burning appliance and are used as living accommodation, and test them on the first day of each new tenancy
- to ensure all gas and electric appliances are safe and maintained in good working order
- to ensure all electrical installations are inspected and tested by someone qualified at least every five years and provide Electrical Incident Condition Reports to tenants on request
- any furniture or furnishings supplied must comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988

## 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. As per your Tenancy Agreement, there are a few things you can do to help maintain safety:

- test and make sure the smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are in working order
- don't obstruct the communal areas, stairs, corridors and landings, as these are often fire escape routes for the building
- don't prop open fire doors
- don't store prams, bicycles or mobility scooters in communal areas
- to report to us promptly any repair, defect (such as damage to fire doors) or anything that doesn't belong there
- manage your home contents - don't store anything that might catch fire or burn in cupboards that have electrical equipment (especially items such as consumer units/fuse boards) unless they have been specifically designed for safe storage
- to allow Freebridge 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.
- many blocks of flats are built to resist fire spreading between individual flats and communal areas - this is called compartmentation. To protect the compartmentation, report any damage to us quickly
- before doing any DIY, check with us that this will not affect any of the fire safety features in your flat (you can check information on our Landlord Permission page [freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/landlord-permissions](https://freebridge.org.uk/freebridge-customer/landlord-permissions))
- there may be facilities in the communal areas that are installed to help fire and rescue

services in an emergency, such as dry and wet risers, opening vents and evacuation alert systems. These should be protected to prevent unauthorised access

- you are advised to insure the contents of your home, your possessions and, in particular, any items you are responsible for (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.**

### **Your Responsibilities as a Leaseholder**

- When carrying out changes to your flat, you should ensure that any material building alterations are agreed and checked by local building control to ensure they comply with the Building Regulations
- If you wish to remove, replace or change your flat entrance doors in any way (including the self-closing mechanism), you should always consult Freebridge before making any such changes.



### **Chargers**

- Always use the genuine charger that came with your phone, tablet, e-cigarette, laptop or mobile device
- Once devices are fully charged, disconnect and turn the charger off
- Do not cover the charger or device as it may heat up during the charging process
- Never charge on soft furnishings, beds, sofas, carpets
- Plug-in air fresheners can present a risk of fire and it is recommended that you do not use them



## Escape plan - what to do if there's a fire or smoke in your home

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.

- Unless the fire is inside your flat, you should stay put inside your home.
- Never tackle a fire yourself. Leave it to the fire and rescue service.
- Keep calm but act quickly, get everyone out.
- 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.
- Children may need to be woken up as they may not hear the sound of the alarm.
- Don't waste time investigating what's happened or rescuing valuables.
- Before you open a door check if it's warm. If it is, don't open it - fire is on the other side.
- Close the doors on the way out.
- Alert any neighbours who might be at risk

from the fire, without putting yourself in danger.

- Use the stairs and never use the lifts, even if you are high up.
- Call 999 as soon as you're clear of the building - 999 calls are free.

**Remember - Get Out. Stay Out. Call 999**

### What if you cannot get out?

- If the fire is inside your flat and your escape route is blocked by fire or smoke, stay inside the safest room with a window that opens, and call the fire and rescue service by calling 999. This will also help firefighters know where you are, and you can get help over the phone.
- Keep the door closed and use towels or bedding at the bottom of the door to block out the smoke, then open the window and shout "HELP, FIRE". Wait to be rescued by a firefighter.

### What to do if you are high up

- In the event of a fire, you should not use the lifts.
- If you can, go down the stairs.

## Portable heaters

- Treat portable heaters as you would an open fire or log burner and never leave unattended
- Plug directly into the wall socket and never into an extension cord
- Do not place too close to combustible sources such as sofas, beds and clothing



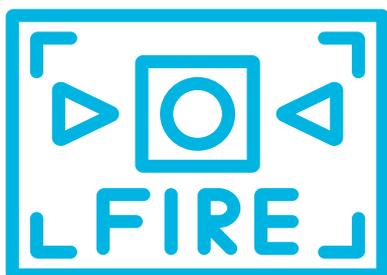
- If you're on the ground floor only, you may be able to escape through a window.
- Use bedding to cushion your fall and lower yourself down carefully. Don't jump!
- If you can't open the window, break the glass in the bottom corner. Make jagged edges as safe as possible with a towel or blanket.

### **If your clothes are on fire**

- Do not run about, it will make the fire worse.
- Lie down and roll around. The fire will get smaller. Use a coat to put out the rest of the fire.

### **If there is a fire in another part of the building**

- If the fire is in another flat, you should stay inside your home. You should only leave if the fire is inside your flat.
- If you feel unsafe, or your flat is affected by heat or smoke, then get out, stay out and call 999.
- Leaving the flat when you're not affected by smoke or the fire can place you in greater danger and can hamper the fire and rescue service response.
- The fire and rescue service may trigger a full evacuation, in which case you'll need to get out and stay out.
- If your escape route is blocked or full of smoke or fire, return to your flat and call 999 so firefighters know where you are and can give you help over the phone.



### **Plan an escape route**

Think in advance of what you would do if there was a fire in your flat or elsewhere in your building where you may need to evacuate:

- Establish where the fire exits and alarms are.
- It is easy to get confused in smoke, so it's important to know how many doors you need to go through to reach the stairs.
- Your own flat may have more than one escape route, for example doors leading to a different access corridor, or the use of a common balcony which leads to an escape route.
- If this is the case, make sure that it remains easy to use and does not become blocked by rubbish or anything else. Remember, you will not have time to clear your escape route when a fire happens.
- Talk through your 'escape plan' with everyone who lives in your home.
- Make sure everyone knows where to find door and window keys.

### **Cigarettes**

- Never smoke in bed
- Use ashtrays and empty to an outside bin regularly
- Use child resistant lighters or matchboxes and keep out of reach of children
- Take extra care if you smoke when tired, use medication or have been drinking alcohol - you could fall asleep and cause a fire
- Never smoke in bed or whilst lying down. Always smoke when alert and if possible outside

## 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.

### Test that your smoke alarms work

- Test your smoke alarms at least monthly by pressing the button on them.
- Make sure you have smoke alarms on every floor and that they can be heard throughout your home.
- If you press the button and there is no sound, change the batteries.
- If your smoke alarms are wired into the mains but are not working, contact us as soon as possible.
- If your smoke alarm goes off by mistake, do not take out the batteries. You can wait for it to stop, or some alarms have a hush button that can be pressed to temporarily silence an alarm.
- Smoke alarms usually need replacing after ten years.
- If any of your smoke alarms have a one-year battery, you must change them every year. Only take out the battery when you need to replace it.
- If you hear a neighbour's smoke alarm, don't ignore it, but alert the resident. If they don't respond, call 999 and ask for the fire and rescue service.



**Top tip: Test it! The most important thing you can do is check that your smoke and fire alarms are working.**

## 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
- Black bin bags and general rubbish
- Furniture, tables, cupboards or chairs other than those supplied by Freebridge
- Door mats or carpets unless fitted or agreed by us
- 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.

## What is a Fire Door?

A fire door acts as a barrier to prevent fires from spreading. They confine the fire to a restricted area, allowing more time for occupants to escape and for the emergency services to arrive. They also keep escape routes clear. Fire doors close automatically and have intumescent strips around the edge, which expand when the door reaches a certain temperature. These strips block smoke and harmful fumes.

## Landlord Responsibilities

According to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, it is the responsibility of whoever oversees the day-to-day running of a building to enforce fire safety measures. In the case of rented properties, this means landlords have a legal obligation to provide fire-safe accommodation for their tenants. This obligation includes installing fire doors in HMOs (Houses in multiple occupation).

Landlords must fit fire doors in place of all regular doors that lead to an escape route. For example, this includes all doors which come off hallways, landings and stairways. The escape route will usually be the front or back door.

Fire doors give tenants enough time to reach the escape route from anywhere in the property, in the case of a fire.

It's the landlord's responsibility to ensure that all tenants in a HMO can access an unrestricted escape route at all times.

Alongside fire doors, HMOs should also have emergency lighting, at least one fire blanket in every shared kitchen, and a fire extinguisher on each floor.



## Tenant Responsibilities

Fire doors are only effective when appropriately managed. Tenants must keep them closed at all times and never prop them open with a doorstop.

Any time you walk through fire doors, make sure you check that they close fully onto the latch behind you.

Although it's your landlord's responsibility to ensure fire doors are repaired when necessary, it's down to the tenants to keep an eye out for signs of damage. Check that the seals are intact, there are no loose hinges, and any gaps around the top and sides of the fire doors are less than 4mm when the door is closed.

## Fire Door Inspections and Maintenance

It's important to check your fire doors regularly to make sure they are in full working order. We aim to have fire doors inspected every 6-12 months, depending on footfall.

If you notice any damage to the fire doors in the property you must let Freebridge know as soon as you can.

### How to prevent common fires in the kitchen

- Do not leave cooking unattended or leave anything on top of your cooker - take pans off the heat
- Take care when wearing loose clothing - it can easily catch fire
- Keep electrical leads, tea towels, and cloths away from the oven or hob
- Spark devices are safer than matches or lighters to light gas cookers
- Switch off the oven or hob when you have finished cooking
- Never leave children alone in the kitchen
- If you deep fry food, consider buying a thermostatically controlled electric deep fat fryer

## 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.

- Extinguish candles safely before going to bed and use appropriate holders or place 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.



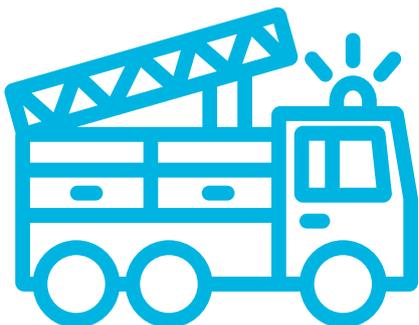
## Barbecue Safety

Barbeques 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.

## 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.



It is required under law for us to communicate with you the Fire Risks that are highlighted from our yearly Fire Risk Assessments of Waterside Sheltered Scheme.

This is a standard practice that all landlords must do to ensure the safety of those living in the building.

**For Waterside Sheltered Scheme, these are the risks we need to resolve that were highlighted in the most recent Fire Risk Assessment:**

- **Plan and conduct evacuation drills**
- **Review and update on site fire signage**
- **Continue with full fire door surveys**

The Fire Risk Assessments are carried out annually and we will update you if there are any changes to the fire safety measures of the building.

Our Head of Health & Safety assesses all of the Fire Risks that are highlighted and in this case, this is not deemed to be a cause of concern. If any Risks are deemed as critical, you will be informed immediately. If you have any concerns or questions, please email

**[Fire.Safety@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:Fire.Safety@freebridge.org.uk)**

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

Freebridge Community Housing  
Juniper House  
Austin Street  
King's Lynn  
Norfolk PE30 1DZ

**Main Telephone:** 03332 404 444

### **Office Opening Hours:**

8:45am - 5.15pm (Mon-Thurs)

8:45am - 4.45pm (Fri)

Bank Holidays, Saturday and Sunday Closed

### **Out of Office Hours:**

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

**You can get further help and advice by heading to:**

**Email:** [hq@fire.norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:hq@fire.norfolk.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 0300 1231669

**Website:** [norfolk.gov.uk/fire](http://norfolk.gov.uk/fire)