

Lambeth Tenants Handbook Health and Safety

Asbestos

Asbestos is the commercial name given to a group of naturally occurring mineral rocks.

Large amounts of asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) were used for a wide range of construction purposes in new and refurbished buildings until 1999, when all use of asbestos was banned.

This means that there are still many buildings which contain asbestos. Where asbestos materials are in good condition and unlikely to be disturbed they don't present a risk. Where the materials are in poor condition, disturbed, or damaged, asbestos fibres can be released into the air. If breathed in, these fibres can cause serious lung diseases, including cancers.

Any building built before 2000 could contain asbestos.

Asbestos can often be found in the following places - this is not an exhaustive list:

- **Exterior of buildings:** roof sheets and tiles, fascia boards, exterior cladding, guttering and drainpipes
- **Boiler:** interior workings, flue pipes, storage radiators
- **Interior surfaces:** textured wall and ceiling coatings such as 'Artex', duct panels (access to pipework), panels behind radiators or heaters, floor tiles, underside of stairs, cupboard door facing and infill panels
- **Other items:** bath panels, fireplace panels, water tank, pipe lagging, garages, outhouses and shed roofs

Asbestos is dangerous and should not be disturbed.

Am I at risk? Current scientific advice says that, if asbestos containing materials are in good condition and unlikely to be disturbed, then the risk presented is minimal.

DIY activities such as sanding or drilling may disturb and possibly damage products containing asbestos, releasing fibres into the air which could put you and others at risk.

Breathing in air containing asbestos fibres can lead to asbestos related diseases which can affect the lungs.

Lambeth council homes

Tenants whose homes contain known or presumed asbestos will be informed when they sign up for their property.

Some of the homes owned by the council have textured decorative coatings on the ceiling or walls, commonly known by the trade name 'Artex', which may contain asbestos. If there is mould on textured decorative coatings, please do not clean this yourself. You can contact the repairs service on [020 7926 6000](tel:02079266000) to arrange for us to inspect this.

Please see: [Further information about textured decorative coatings](#).

If you have concerns about asbestos in your home or are a Lambeth housing tenant who requires emergency repairs, you can contact Lambeth housing repairs team on [020 7926 6000](tel:02079266000),

Monday-Friday 8am-8pm and Saturday 8am-1pm. To report emergencies outside our working hours and on bank holidays, call us on [020 7926 6666](tel:02079266666).

For asbestos concerns related to Lambeth Housing communal areas, please contact hmasbestossafety@lambeth.gov.uk

Fire safety

Most fires in the home are started accidentally.

You can help keep your home safe by taking a few simple precautions.

Smoke /heat alarms

Make sure you have working smoke / heat alarms installed in your home.

Lambeth Council installs smoke /heat alarms in your home for your safety. They make a loud noise when there's signs of fire in your home giving time to escape.

The detectors are usually connected to the mains electricity. If there is a power failure, or not enough money on your key meter, the battery back-up in the alarms will run out in around two days. The alarms will not work again until mains power comes back on and fully recharges the back-up batteries.

Lambeth Council has a programme in place to ensure all homes have a hard-wired smoke alarm in place. Some homes may still have a battery-operated alarm while waiting for the installation of the hard-wired version. If you still have a battery-operated alarm, it is your responsibility to replace the battery. When you change a battery, make sure it is the correct type and always use a new one. After you have changed the battery, test the alarm to make sure it is working – never assume it is. When a battery starts to run low, the alarm will make an occasional beeping sound to warn you that the battery needs to be replaced. The alarm will still operate if smoke is detected, but the longer you take to change the battery, the weaker the alarm will become. If you do not change the battery, the alarm will eventually stop beeping and will not detect smoke in an emergency.

Make sure to test your smoke alarm regularly and report any fault or issue with them to Lambeth housing repairs on [020 7926 6000](tel:02079266000). Issues or faults with smoke or carbon monoxide alarms are treated as an emergency and will be acted on quickly.

Enclosed Communal Areas (e.g. corridors and landings)

- To minimise the risk of trip hazards which in the event of a fire could impact on evacuation these areas must be unobstructed– no items are to be stored / left in the communal areas.

- Combustible items will be removed without notice to mitigate fire safety risks. Such items include:
 - Mobility Scooters
 - Washing Machines / tumble dryers and other white goods

- Other items will be issued with a 24-hour removal notice enabling the resident to make alternative storage arrangements. Such items include:
 - Bicycles
 - Door mats
 - Children's toys and play furniture
 - Clothes / dryers
 - Pictures
 - Plants
 - Pushchairs / Buggies / children's car seats
 - Refuse bags
 - Wooden furniture / upholstered seating
 - Shopping Trolleys
 - Shoes

If we have installed fire doors, door closers, wired smoke alarms or heat detectors, fire action notices in communal areas or in your home do not remove or disable them, as they are designed to keep you safe from fire.

Open Communal Spaces

For the safety of residents, we maintain a zero tolerance policy towards breaches of fire safety. All communal areas that are enclosed or opened and form part of the means of escape must be unobstructed with no items whatsoever left in them. This is to remove all fire and trip hazards and to protect residents' well-being.

The council will take a 'managed approach' for properties with multiple means of escape and below six storeys. In these properties we will allow the following items: framed pictures, pot plants, push chairs, mobility scooters outside front entry doors. There will be further escalation of our managed approach to a zero tolerance approach if risks arise from items left outside front entry doors.

It is important that items left in communal areas are not allowed to hinder emergency evacuation or obstruct disabled refuge points in case of fire. Lambeth Council reserves the right to remove any items left or deposited in communal areas without limitation, should they be causing a fire risk and/or blocking the access to exit routes.

Window and Front Door Gates / Grilles

Based on guidance from the London Fire Brigade (LFB), the council does not permit residents to install gates or grilles across individual property windows and front doors. Such installations are a breach of tenancy and leasehold conditions and are considered to be a potential risk to residents' safety if the fire service needs to gain access in an

emergency. A security gate or grille could add significantly to the time it takes the fire service to enter property and they therefore could endanger life.

Where residents have significant safeguarding/security concerns and their door is not secured by design, the door may be replaced with a new fire rated security door. For this, the case would be referred to the London Metropolitan police who could put in place further safeguarding measures.

In these cases, we could need to meet the information sharing requirements of the Crime and Disorder act 1998 and to make the local Fire Station Commissioner aware of additional barriers or security compartment alterations to entrance doors. This still does not permit the installation of grilles.

Where gates or grilles have been installed, a request will be made for removal within a given timescale, failing which the matter will be referred for court action

Electric bikes and electric scooters (e-bikes and e-scooters)

Most electric bikes or electric scooters are powered by lithium batteries which can be charged in the home. If damaged or failing these batteries can cause a fire hazard.

Further detail about what you can do to protect yourself and others from the risks of batteries in e-bikes and e-scooters is on the London Fire Brigade (LFB) website including:

Charging your batteries safely – how you can reduce the risk of fire when you charge an e-bike or e-scooter

Spot the warning signs – the warning signs your e-bike or e-bike battery is a fire hazard

E-bikes and e-scooters – how to make sure your e-bike or e-scooter is not putting your safety at risk

The following link is to the London Fire Brigade (LFB) website:

<https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/lithium-batteries/>

Home fire-safety visits

The London Fire Brigade offers a free home visits to offer advice on how to make your home safe from fire. Priority is given to people and places where there is known to be a higher risk of fire. This includes older people; people living alone; and people whose mobility, vision and hearing are impaired. It also includes mental-health services users and residents who may be affected by alcohol or drug misuse.

If you would like a visit, or know someone who you think needs help, please contact the London Fire Brigade:

Telephone: 020 8555 1200

Email: info@london-fire.gov.uk

Visit: www.london-fire.gov.uk/HomeFireSafetyVisit.asp

Fire Safety in high-rise blocks

If you live in a flat, it is important you read and understand this extra advice. Each flat in our high-rise blocks is built to withstand fire for 30 to 60 minutes. This allows enough time for the fire brigade to arrive and assess the extent of the fire.

If there is a fire in your home:

- Alert any other people in the flat;
- Leave the room at once and close the door to prevent smoke and fire spreading. Don't tackle the fire yourself unless it is safe to do so;
- Leave the flat calmly, and when everyone is out, close the front door to prevent smoke and fire spreading;
- Leave your block using the emergency exit and not the lift. Don't use balconies unless they are part of an official escape route;
- Call the fire brigade on **999** - it's free from any telephone. Give the operator your address including the number of your flat, **and tell them which floor the fire is on;**
- Make yourself known to the fire brigade as soon as possible.

If there is a fire in your building:

- Stay inside your flat if you don't know where the fire is located;
- Close your front door and your windows to prevent smoke entering your home;
- Listen for instructions from the fire brigade;
- The fire brigade will guide you to a safe location, if they think you should evacuate your home;
- If you feel threatened by fire or smoke and it is safe to leave your flat, leave the building via the emergency exit, closing your front door behind you.

If there is a fire in your building, if you feel threatened by fire or smoke, or your flat is affected by fire or smoke – you should leave the building if it is safe to do so.

Stay in your home if you are not directly affected by the fire, otherwise you may be putting yourself and your household at risk from smoke. Wait for advice and direction from the fire brigade.

Fire Safety in purpose built blocks of flats

1. Your Building

Your flat is in a building designed to a high fire safety standard. You need to be aware of all the escape routes in your flat and the building as **this could save your life in the event of a fire.**

Purpose-built blocks of flats have varying designs, but in most cases the fire escape route is the normal route you take from your flat when leaving the building. Some buildings or flats have an alternative escape route you can use.

When you need to evacuate your flat, in the event of a fire, **one of the following will apply:**

- You walk out of your flat entry door on to a balcony that is open. You can only walk in one direction, to a staircase that takes you to a point on the ground floor where you can leave the building.
- You walk out of your flat entry door on to a balcony that is open. You then can walk in two possible directions to a staircase that takes you to a point on the ground floor where you can leave the building.
- You walk out of your flat entry door into an enclosed lobby or corridor. Then you can only walk in one direction to a staircase that takes you to a point on the ground floor where you can leave the building.
- You walk out of your flat entry door into an enclosed lobby or corridor. Then you can walk in two possible directions to a staircase that takes you to a point on the ground floor where you can leave the building.

2. Multi-Level Flat (maisonette)

The inside of your flat is on two or three levels. There are two main designs to these types of flats when you need to escape in a fire:

- You walk down or up the staircase inside your flat to your flat entry door to get to the common fire escape route for the building.
- On one of the upper or lower floors in your flat there is a door that takes you to an alternative or second escape route from your flat. Once you go through this door it will take you - sometimes via a staircase – to a route that leads into an escape corridor/balcony or staircase. This may not be on the same floor as your normal flat entry door. You need to get to know these escape routes so you remember to use them in a fire.

3. What should you do if there is a fire in your flat?

- Make sure everyone in your flat leaves it. Shut your flat entry door – or alternative escape door - as you leave. This helps keep the fire in your flat and stops the fire and smoke spreading to affect your neighbours.
- Use the fire escape route to safely leave your building
- Do not use the lift if your building has one
- Phone the fire brigade by dialling **999**

- Wait at a safe distance outside your building for the fire brigade to arrive.

4. What should you do if the fire is not in your flat?

The “**Stay Put**” policy asks people to stay safely in their flat if they are not directly affected by the fire. Because of the size and layout of blocks of flats you probably won’t know there is a fire in another flat in your building. Flats are designed to be fire-resistant containers, joined together to make a block of flats. This means the fire should stay in one flat long enough for the fire brigade to arrive and put out the fire before it spreads to any other flat or blocks any escape route. If the fire is in your flat you must leave it, closing the door behind you.

If you feel threatened, can see or smell smoke, or feel heat from a fire in another flat, you should leave your flat and leave the building via the fire escape route if it is safe to do so. **Do not “Stay Put”**.

Stay FIRE SAFE by completing the following

FIRE SAFETY CHECK LIST SINGLE LEVEL FLAT

1. There is a working smoke alarm in my flat
Yes / No
2. Everybody who lives in my flat has walked all of the fire escape routes from the flat entrance door to the exit from the building
Yes / No

FIRE SAFETY CHECK LIST MULTI - LEVEL FLAT

1. There is a working smoke alarm in my flat
Yes / No
2. Everybody who lives in my flat has walked all of the fire escape routes from the flat entrance door to the exit from the building
Yes / No
3. I have checked to see if there is a second escape point from my flat
Yes / No
4. Everybody who lives in my flat has walked the second escape point to the exit from the building
Yes / No

Always keep exit routes clear.

Your Neighbourhood Housing Officer may take appropriate tenancy enforcement action against residents who persistently leave rubbish or their personal belongings in passageways.

If you want more information about fire safety, please contact the Fire Safety Team:

Telephone: 020 7926 4270

Email: HMfiresafety@lambeth.gov.uk

Visit: <https://housingmanagement.lambeth.gov.uk>

Gas safety

Every year we must check all our gas appliances and pipework to reduce the risk of an explosion or carbon monoxide poisoning. We will always use Gas Safe registered engineers. You must allow our contractor into your home to do the safety check. Up to two months before the last Gas Certificate expires, they will write to you with an appointment. You will be able to identify the contractor by their identity pass.

These safety checks do not cover gas appliances you own, such as a gas cooker that you have installed. It is your responsibility to get these appliances checked regularly by a Gas Safe registered engineer. For more details:

Telephone: 0800 408 5500

Visit: www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Signs your appliance(s) may be dangerous

Contact us or a Gas Safe engineer if you spot any signs that your appliance may not be working properly.

These include:

- Yellow or orange flames, rather than blue (apart from fuel-effect fires or flueless appliances, which display only yellow or orange flames)
- Soot, yellow or brown staining around or on appliances
- Pilot lights that often blowout
- Increased condensation inside windows

Carbon monoxide (CO) alarms

If the alarm sounds, call the free, 24-hour National Gas Emergency Services hotline on 0800 111 999.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas. You cannot see, taste or smell carbon monoxide but it can kill without warning in a short amount of time. Carbon monoxide can escape from gas appliances that are not working properly e.g. they are damaged, incorrectly installed or poorly maintained.

We have a programme to install carbon monoxide detectors in properties with individual gas boilers.

The detectors are usually connected to the mains electricity. If there is a power failure, or not enough money on your key meter, the battery back-up in the alarms

will run out in around two days. The alarms will not work again until mains power comes back on and fully recharges the back-up batteries.

While the programme to upgrade to hard-wired alarms is taking place you may still have a battery-operated alarm installed in your home - if you do, it is your responsibility to replace the battery. When you change a battery, make sure it is the correct type and always use a new one. After you have changed the battery, test the alarm to make sure it is working – never assume it is.

Make sure to test your carbon monoxide alarm regularly and report any faults or problems with them to Lambeth housing repairs on [020 7926 6000](tel:02079266000). Issues or faults with carbon monoxide alarms will be treated as an emergency and acted on quickly.

Find out more about carbon monoxide poisoning in the following link:
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/carbon-monoxide-poisoning/>

Water Safety

To maintain good water quality in your home and ensure your water system remains free from dirt and blockages, we advise you to:

- Clean taps to prevent the build up of limescale and disinfect using a regular household brand of cleaning fluid.
- Descale your shower heads every two to three months by removing the shower head and cleaning it in hot water.
- If you haven't used a tap or shower for a while, let the water run for a few minutes before using it again, to allow fresh water to come through from the mains water supply.
- Should your property be empty for long periods - for example, if you're on holiday or in hospital - the taps need to be flushed through on a weekly basis to avoid stagnation of water in the pipework.

What is legionella?

Legionella is a type of bacteria found in stagnant water. Legionella bacteria is generally not harmful in low concentrations, though it can cause a bacterial infection such as legionnaire's disease. However, the risk is low because your water is stored in small quantities, and at the right temperatures for hot and cold water. This means that the bacteria do not usually have time to grow to significant levels.

Some properties (usually flats in blocks) have larger stores of water, and these are managed by the council directly to reduce the risk. However, if it develops in your home water system it can cause a bacterial infection such as legionnaire's disease.

The risk can increase if a property is vacant for any length of time due to the water in the pipes just sitting there. The build up of limescale could also provide a base for the bacteria to grow on. So, it is important to remove and prevent the buildup of limescale, and to run taps and showers as advised above.

What does the council do?

We inspect and maintain water systems which have communal Storage Tanks. We carry out risk assessments on housing blocks to identify and assess any sources of risk and deal with them.

Most of our properties, especially homes with water direct from the mains to combination boilers, will be very low risk but we may want to randomly sample water for testing or test the temperature.

Should you require any further information please contact your Housing Officer by calling them direct or contact 0207 926 1000.

Ice and snow

Our contractors do their best to keep communal paths clear and gritted in cold weather. We recommend you use these paths in icy or snowy weather, rather than cutting across shorter routes. If you want to make a difference and help your community during periods of heavy snow, sign up to Lambeth Council's volunteer snow warden scheme. The scheme provides residents and communities with the training, equipment and grit needed to keep paths and quieter residential roads free from snow.

For more information about the snow warden scheme:

Telephone: 020 7926 0524

Email: SnowWardens@lambeth.gov.uk