



co-op
H O M E S
part of RHP Group

STAY

FIRE

SAFE

At Co-op Homes we place an absolute priority on fire safety across all our customers' homes.



It's our legal duty to keep you, your family, and your neighbours safe and make sure you can easily escape from your home if a fire breaks out in your block.

This leaflet explains the measures we take to keep you safe, as well as the common fire risks in your home and how to reduce them.

How we keep you fire safe



- ▶ We carry out gas and fire safety checks before you move in. This includes testing the electrical wiring, making sure fire doors are working and that all escape routes are clear.
- ▶ A smoke alarm system is provided in converted blocks and our new-build properties are fitted with smoke alarms in line with current building regulations. All other properties have smoke alarms installed during upgrades or when they're empty. Get in touch if you don't have a smoke alarm in your property.
- ▶ In blocks of flats, we make sure communal areas and general building facilities are well maintained and check the electrical, gas and emergency fire detection devices.
- ▶ We have to make sure communal areas remain clear and free from obstructions. We carry out periodic inspections of the common parts for safety issues, identify repairs and make arrangements to dispose of items left in the communal areas.
- ▶ During our annual gas safety check our specialist contractor tests your smoke and carbon monoxide detector.
- ▶ If you live in a flat, we inspect your flat entrance door once a year.
- ▶ We use third-party accredited fire risk assessors to make sure your building meets fire safety standards and correct it when we find gaps.



How you can keep fire safe



You're less likely to have a fire in your home if you've received a free home fire safety visit from your local fire brigade. Visit the website of your local fire service, search for '**home fire safety visit**' to book one online or call **0800 028 4428**.

- ▶ Make sure everyone in your home knows and has practised the escape route.
- ▶ If any of your smoke alarms go off, never assume it's a false alarm.
- ▶ Shout '**FIRE**' to alert other people in your home and block.
- ▶ Don't waste time investigating what's happened or rescuing valuables – get out, stay out, shut the door behind you and call **999**.
- ▶ Don't try and tackle fires yourself – leave it to the professionals.
- ▶ Try and keep calm and remember that sometimes it's safer to stay put.
- ▶ Before you open a door, check if it's warm with the back of your hand. If it's, don't open it – there may be a fire on the other side.
- ▶ If there's smoke, keep low where the air is clearer.
- ▶ Help others who may be in difficulty on their way out.
- ▶ Call **999** as soon as you're safe to do so.
- ▶ Never go back into the building once you're safely outside.

If your clothes catch fire, don't run. Try and remember '**STOP, DROP, ROLL**' – which means:

- ▶ **STOP:** don't run, you will make the flames worse.
- ▶ **DROP:** lie down on the ground at once.
- ▶ **ROLL:** in heavy fabric or a fire blanket to smother the flames, though just on the ground will help.



If you live in a flat and there's a fire in your block

Purpose-built maisonettes and blocks of flats are built to give you some protection from fire. This means walls, floors and doors can hold back flames and smoke for 30 to 60 minutes.

- ▶ You're usually safer staying put and calling **999**.
- ▶ Tell the fire brigade where you are and how to reach you.

If there's a fire in your flat

- ▶ Take the normal way out but don't use the lift.
- ▶ Keep door keys where everyone in your home can find them.
- ▶ Don't waste time investigating what's happened or rescuing valuables – remember, get out, stay out and close the door behind you.
- ▶ Move quickly and safely to exit the building.
- ▶ Close doors behind you to slow down the spread of fire and smoke.
- ▶ Call **999** as soon as it's safe to do so.

If your escape route is blocked, you should:

- ▶ Find a safe room as far as possible within the flat from any fire or smoke (with a window if possible), close the door and use soft materials to block any gaps to stop the smoke.
- ▶ Go to a window, shout '**HELP, FIRE**' and call **999**.
- ▶ Be ready to describe where you are and the quickest way for firefighters to reach you.
- ▶ Try and stay on the line and act on the advice provided.

If you live in a house



- ▶ The best route is the normal way you come in and out of your home.
- ▶ Plan a second route in case the first one is blocked – consider ground floor windows.
- ▶ Take a few minutes to practice your escape plan regularly.
- ▶ Keep door and window keys where everyone you live with can find them – on hooks behind curtains or boxes on windowsills perhaps.
- ▶ If you've got security gates or shutters, make sure they can be easily opened from the inside without a key.
- ▶ If you – or anyone you live with – might find it difficult to escape quickly without help in an emergency, make extra plans to get them to safety, and visit the London Fire Brigade website to book a free home fire safety visit.
- ▶ Make sure everyone in your home understands what to do in a fire.

If your escape route is blocked, you should:

- ▶ Get everyone into one room, ideally with a window and a phone. Close the door and put bedding or any soft materials around the bottom of the door to block the smoke, then open the window and shout '**HELP, FIRE!**'
- ▶ Call **999** if you've got a phone with you – be ready to describe where you're and the quickest way to reach you.
- ▶ If you're on the ground or first floor, you may be able to escape through a window. Don't jump – use soft materials to cushion your fall and lower yourself down carefully.

Contact us

If you or anyone living with you has a health or mobility concern that may affect your ability to self-evacuate or put you at greater risk in the event of fire, please get in touch. Let us know if you use any medical equipment such as oxygen bottles.

Details of what to do in case of fire are also displayed on notices in the communal areas of your building.

Stay escape route safe



Leaving items in communal areas can block emergency exit routes and prevent the fire brigade and our employees and contractors from carrying out their duties. If items are set alight, they give off toxic smoke and gas which might reduce your visibility. They could also explode or cause the fire to spread more quickly. For everyone's safety, no items should be kept in communal areas.

Only purpose-made door mats are permitted.

We share our Clear Communal Areas policy with customers regularly.

If we find any items in communal areas, we'll remove them, according to our policy.

You should:

- ▶ Never store personal items in intake cupboards
- ▶ Always keep meter cupboards locked shut when not in use.
- ▶ Always keep stores locked shut when not in use.

If an item is removed and you'd like it back, you will need to get in touch and pay removal and storage costs.

If you have any large or bulky items of household waste, you can arrange for them to be removed through your local council.

Stay fire door safe



Fire doors are an integral part of any building's fire protection system. Fire doors are important because they keep fire and smoke in the room or compartment where it starts and stop it from spreading to other areas of the building.

To help us keep escape routes safe for everyone:

- ▶ You must never change your front door without getting our permission first. If you've changed your front door in the past without letting us know, please get in touch as soon as possible.
- ▶ You must not tamper with the self-closing device. Leave it connected to the door. The door closer is an important part of the fire door, as it makes sure the door closes into the frame. It is critical in case of an emergency, so the fire and smoke do not spread.
- ▶ Do not leave the doors propped open, unattended.
- ▶ Make sure the letter box doesn't get damaged.
- ▶ Report any damage to your door to us immediately.

Do not alter your fire door!

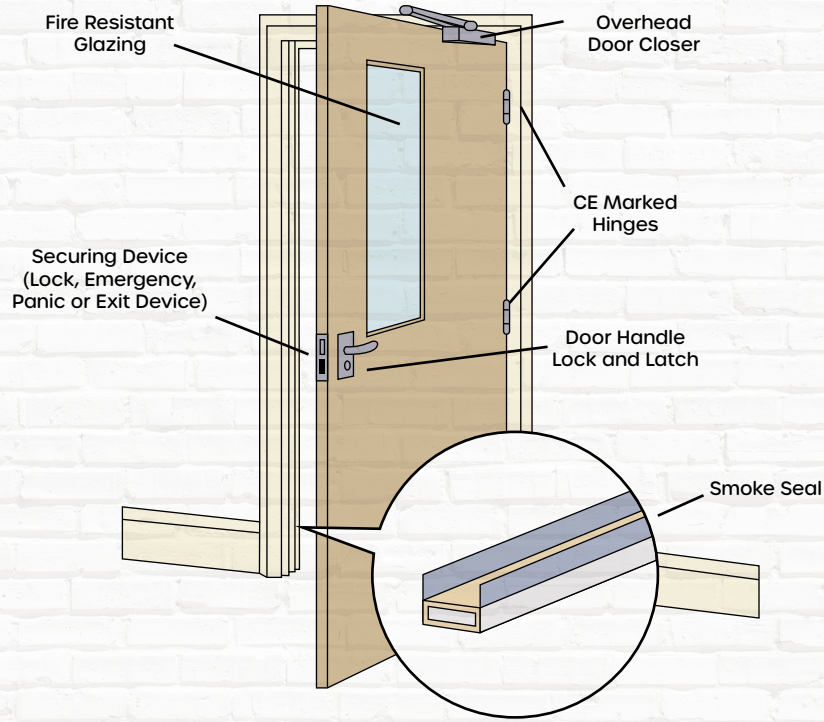
Never carry out repairs or work on your fire door. This can damage it and make it less likely to work properly in an emergency.

- ▶ Don't drill into your door or cut it in any way.
- ▶ Don't paint over the door seals.
- ▶ Don't replace handles, hinges, or any hardware. Repairs must be carried out by a competent person.

If you live in a flat, we have a legal duty to make sure your flat entrance door is in a proper working order.

To satisfy the requirements we must carry out periodic inspections of your flat entrance doors. To keep you and your neighbours safe, you must let us into your property when we arrange these inspections. The inspection takes around 15 minutes.

What makes a fire door work?



Stay cooking safe



Fires are more likely to start in your kitchen than any other room in your home but there are lots of practical things you can do to keep the chance of a fire to a minimum.

You should:

- ▶ Try not to leave cooking unattended on the hob or grill – if you must leave the kitchen, turn off the heat.
- ▶ Keep saucepan handles out of reach of children.
- ▶ Avoid cooking if you're very tired, have been drinking alcohol or are taking medication that might make you drowsy. Order a takeaway - it's safer not to risk it.
- ▶ Be careful what you wear – loose clothing can easily catch fire, so don't lean over a hot hob.
- ▶ Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob.
- ▶ Keep the oven, hob, cooker hood, extractor fan and grill clean – fat and grease can ignite and cause a fire.
- ▶ Use spark devices to light gas cookers – they're much safer than matches or lighters, as they don't have a naked flame.
- ▶ Double check the cooker and hob are turned off when you've finished cooking – if you're forgetful (or someone you care for can be), take a photo if you've a smartphone, to remind you to double check every time.
- ▶ Check toasters are clean and not placed under kitchen cabinets or close to anything that can catch fire.
- ▶ Never put anything metal in the microwave.

Stay BBQ safe



It's great to get out in the fresh air and spend time cooking up a feast. However, barbecues can be dangerous if not handled responsibly, so it's important to keep safety in mind, especially when kids and pets are involved.

- ▶ **Never** use a BBQ indoors or on your balcony.
- ▶ Position your BBQ on level ground and keep it away from anything that could catch fire, like sheds, fences, trees, and tents.
- ▶ Never leave the BBQ unattended.
- ▶ Only use enough charcoal to cover the base of the BBQ.
- ▶ Don't use petrol, paraffin, or any flammable liquids on your BBQ – firelighters are a much safer option.
- ▶ Be careful with fatty foods as they can create violent flames.
- ▶ Keep children, pets, and garden games away from the BBQ.
- ▶ Keep a bucket of water or sand nearby to smother the BBQ in an emergency.

- ▶ After cooking, make sure the BBQ has cooled before moving it.
- ▶ Empty cold ashes into garden soil not into bins.
- ▶ Don't drink too much alcohol when using a BBQ.
- ▶ BBQs can stay hot for hours, so be careful moving them. They also give off carbon monoxide fumes for several hours after they go out, so don't bring them indoors with you.



Stay smoking safe



Smoking is the most common cause of fire fatalities. The best way to stay safe is to stub out the cigarettes for good. There's lots of support available at www.nhs.uk/smokefree.

Tips to smoke safely

- ▶ Make sure cigarettes are put right out and disposed of properly. It's safer to smoke outside, but remember, **communal areas are no-smoking areas.**
- ▶ Never smoke in bed and avoid smoking on armchairs and sofas – especially if you think you might fall asleep.
- ▶ Take extra care when you're tired, taking prescription drugs or if you've been drinking alcohol.
- ▶ Use proper ashtrays, which cannot tip over and stub cigarettes out properly.
- ▶ Don't balance cigars or cigarettes on the edge of an ashtray, or anything else – they can tip and fall as they burn away and cause a fire.
- ▶ Don't leave lit pipes or cigarettes unattended.
- ▶ Make sure smoking materials like ashtrays are out, cold and preferably wet them before throwing into a bin – never use a wastepaper basket.
- ▶ Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach and buy child resistant lighters.
- ▶ Never smoke if you use healthcare equipment like medical oxygen or have an air flow pressure relief mattress. If you use paraffin-based emollient creams, ask for non-flammable alternatives instead.
- ▶ Consider extra safety measures like fire retardant bedding or nightwear.

Stay electric safe



From overloaded extension leads to cheap chargers and white goods not fit for the job, electrical items are a common cause of fire. Since 2010 there have been over 2,500 fires in London connected to white goods like fridges, freezers, tumble dryers, washing machines, electric bikes and electric scooters.

How we keep you electric safe

Before we let out a property, we carry out electrical installation check and confirm it's safe. We have a programme to re-inspect every rented property at least every five years and carry out any necessary repairs or remedial work. We only use qualified registered electricians to carry out electrical works and we make sure any electrical work complies with the Building Regulations.

You can help us keep you safe by allowing us into your home to carry out the electrical test or any other repairs needed.



How you can keep electric safe (continued)



Never install, repair or service electrical appliances yourself. DIY wiring or electrical repairs can lead to electrical parts overheating, causing fires, shocks and death. Make sure anyone who does is registered with the Gas Safe Register for gas appliances), the Heating Equipment Testing and Approval Scheme/HETAS for solid fuel appliances, or the Oil Firing Technical Association/OFTEC for oil appliances.

You should also:

- ▶ Make sure electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark when you buy them.
 - ▶ Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order.
 - ▶ Not buy cheap counterfeit chargers for items that use lithium batteries, and never leave phones or laptops plugged in to charge overnight.
 - ▶ Empty fluff regularly from tumble dryers.
 - ▶ Switch hair appliances off and leave them to cool on a heatproof surface.
- ▶ Try to keep to one plug per socket, especially for high-powered appliances like washing machines.
 - ▶ Always check you're using the right fuse.
 - ▶ Completely unwind drum extension leads to avoid overheating and be careful not to overload extension leads.
 - ▶ Register white goods – it could save your life if a product is recalled for safety reasons.
 - ▶ Share your fire safety knowledge with the whole family – check the kids' chargers, and make sure everyone knows how to use electric blankets safely.

It's also important to know the signs of a potential electrical problem. Look out for scorch marks, flickering lights, hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that trip for no obvious reason. These could all be signs of loose or dangerous wiring. If in doubt, contact us.

To check whether your existing equipment has a fault and was recalled by the manufacturer, visit www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls.

How you can keep electric safe (continued)



Portable heaters

Electric heaters can be a great way to keep warm – especially if you only want to warm up one room. However, they should be used with care. Over the last five years over 800 fires were caused by electric heaters, and one-third of those resulted in a fatality.

- ▶ Fires normally start when bedding, blankets or clothes are placed too close to heaters.
- ▶ People with mobility issues are especially at risk of tripping or falling onto a heater – placing them at a safe distance is even more important.
- ▶ Some kinds of heater also present a carbon monoxide risk – which can make you sleepy and less able to escape. That is why it's so important to always fit a carbon monoxide alarm in rooms with solid fuel, gas or paraffin heaters.

If you have a portable heater, you should:

- ▶ Make sure it's well maintained, not on a recall list and in good working order.
- ▶ Not take risks with old heaters – if it's electrical and getting older, get it tested by a qualified electrician or buy a new one.
- ▶ Secure heaters against a wall to stop them falling over, or fit wall-mounted heaters.
- ▶ Keep heaters well away from clothes, curtains and furniture and never use them for drying clothes.
- ▶ Always sit at least one metre away from a heater as it could set light to your clothes or chair.
- ▶ Turn a heater off and allow it to cool before moving it.

Stay candle safe



Candles are another common cause of home fires, so they need handling with care. To be safer you could swap your wax candles for flameless ones.

Using candles safely

- ▶ Make sure you put out any candles when you leave the room and especially before bed.
- ▶ Candles should always be held firmly in heat-resistant holders and placed on a stable surface where they won't be knocked over.
- ▶ Keep them away from curtains, furniture, clothes, and hair.
- ▶ Be especially careful if you've a lot of flammable items in your home, like collections of books, magazines, or papers.
- ▶ Be aware that tea lights get very hot and can melt through plastic surfaces like a TV or bath. Use proper holders.
- ▶ To avoid accidents, keep candles and other naked flames out of reach of children and pets.

Stay celebration safe



At Bonfire Night, Diwali, Halloween, and Christmas lots of us like to light candles, dress up, and display decorations – increasing the risk of fire. Make sure all decorations are kept away from naked flames.

Unfortunately, costumes don't have to be made to the same safety standards as regular clothes, which means they're a greater fire risk. If you're celebrating with fancy dress, check that costumes are in line with European standard EN71-2.

Any questions?

If you've got any questions about fire safety in your home, the Co-op Homes team is here to help.

Email us at customer.services@rhp.org.uk or call **0203 166 2608**.

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