

Keeping you and your family safe



A safety handbook for tenants
October 2024

We're working hard to keep you safe

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's buildings are designed to keep you and your loved ones safe in the event of fire

But that's only half the story. We also need your help, which is why we've produced this, our very first Safety Handbook for Tenants.

Over the following pages, it shows you how you can help yourselves stay safe whilst living in our buildings so that together we have the very best chance of avoiding a tragedy.

Here's what we're doing

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) blocks of flats are purpose-built buildings designed from the outset to minimise the spread of fire.

Fire doors

NBBC fits fire doors throughout our buildings as required – this includes the front doors to individual flats when necessary.

Fire doors and their frames save lives by delaying the spread of fire through a building, keeping you and your neighbours safe until the fire brigade arrives – but they can only protect you if you protect them.

Fire alarm systems

Our buildings are equipped with fire alarm systems which will sound an alarm if fire is detected in your home.

NNBC operates a STAY PUT policy

In the event of fire in your home, or in the room that you are in, GET OUT of the building immediately by following the emergency exit signs and then call 999.

If the fire alarm sounds in another part of the building and there is NO FIRE where you are, you must **STAY PUT** making sure that your front door is shut. You should only leave when the fire service tells you it is safe to do so.

This is the **SAFEST** way to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Regular routine testing

To make sure our buildings continue to be safe, we carry out regular checks and inspections. These include regular site inspections to ensure walkways and stairwells are kept clear of obstructions, monitoring and maintenance of fire alarm systems and fire risk assessments.

Here's how you can help

These fire prevention systems can only save lives if they are working properly, and you have a big part to play in ensuring they do.

Don't tamper with your fire alarm

Do not paint or cover your fire alarm. Do not try to disconnect if you set it off accidentally. If there is a problem with it contact NBBC.

Allow us access to do routine checks

You can help us by replying quickly to our requests to visit your home, keeping to any arranged appointments, and by letting us know when you won't be there to let us in.

Don't do anything that might damage your fire door

Never hang anything from, or fix anything to your fire door or its frame with screws, nails or even self-adhesive tape. Don't ever paint or decorate your fire door or its frame. NEVER prop your fire door open – not even for a minute – and do not disconnect or disable the automatic door closer. These rules apply to all fire doors in your building.

Keep walkways and stairwells clear

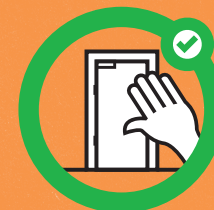
This will help minimise the spread of fire, enable people to get out quickly, and allow the fire service unobstructed access.

Safety at a glance

Don't tamper with your fire alarm



ALWAYS keep your fire door shut



Don't damage your fire door or its frame



In the event of fire in your flat get your family out and call 999



If you have any questions or concerns call our dedicated electrical safety helpline

Fire safety for tenants

Everyday fire safety is the best way to protect your home and family

On average, there are around 35,000 house fires every year in the UK, and the majority of these could have been prevented by better fire safety awareness.

Fire safety in the kitchen

Did you know, around half of all house fires in the UK start in the kitchen?

Keep flammable items away from your cooker and hob

Keep tea towels and other cloths away from the cooker and hob, and take extra care when wearing loose clothing as this could easily catch fire. It is a good idea to keep a fire blanket in the kitchen.

Switch off kitchen appliances

NEVER leave pans on the hob unattended, and always switch off kitchen appliances when not in use. Keep your hob, oven and grill clean and in good working order as a build-up of grease could easily catch fire.

Microwave safety

NEVER put anything metal inside your microwave oven, and do not leave anything on top of it that could block its air vents and catch fire.



Take care when cooking with hot oil

If it starts to smoke it is too hot, so turn off the heat and let it cool. Don't over fill the pan with oil or ingredients, and avoid splashing oil onto the hob as it could easily catch fire.

If possible, use a thermostatically-controlled fat fryer which can't overheat.

What to do if a pan catches fire

In the event of a pan fire, do not tackle it yourself. NEVER throw water over it, this will make the fire spread quickly. Get yourself and your family out and call 999.

NO SMOKING

NBBC has a no smoking policy in all of our properties. Nevertheless, it is a fact that careless use of tobacco, cigarettes and vapes is still a major cause of house fires. Every year, sixty people die as the result of house fires caused by cigarettes.

Use candles safely

Take care when using candles. Do not place them near curtains or soft furnishings, and make sure they are properly extinguished when finished with.

TAKE CARE WHEN USING HEATERS

- Keep portable heaters away from curtains, soft furnishings and furniture
- NEVER dry clothes in front of electric heaters or gas fires
- NEVER cover the air vents on storage heaters or fan heaters as they may overheat and catch fire

Be extra careful when using electric blankets

Always switch off electric blankets before you get into bed – unless they have a thermostat or timer that allows safe overnight use. Store them carefully when not in use to avoid damaging the heating elements.

Use electrical appliances safely

Please read our 'Electrical safety for tenants' section on pages 6 and 7 which gives more advice on preventing household fires.

Safety at a glance

Switch off appliances when not in use



Keeping a fire blanket in your kitchen is a good idea



NEVER throw water over an oil pan fire



In the event of fire get yourself and your family out and call 999



If you have any questions or concerns call our dedicated electrical safety helpline

Electrical safety for tenants

Using electricity in the home safely will help you and your loved ones avoid the risks of electric shock and electrical fire

They may seem like common sense, but the likelihood of electrical accidents occurring in the home can be significantly reduced by following these simple guidelines.

Check your plugs and sockets

Regularly check the condition of plugs and sockets and replace any damaged or worn electrical cables. Plugs should be fitted with the correctly sized fuses and their cables clamped firmly into place so that no coloured wires are showing. If you see burn marks or hear any crackling or buzzing sounds when using plugs and sockets, or if they feel hot to the touch, stop using them immediately and contact NBBC.

Don't overload your sockets

We all need to use adapters and extension leads, but it is very important to do so safely.

NEVER plug an adaptor into another adapter and try to limit what you plug into extension leads to low current devices such as radios, TVs, computers and game consoles and hi-fi equipment. High current appliances such as kettles, irons and heaters should always be plugged directly into wall-mounted sockets where possible.

Only use plugs, adapters and extension leads from reputable brands with the British Standard safety mark.

Don't trail electrical cables across floors or under carpets or rugs

As well as the obvious trip hazard which itself can cause injury, cables may be pulled out from plugs leaving bare wires dangerously exposed with a high risk of electric shock and electrical fire.

When hidden under carpets or rugs, cables can get damaged and go un-noticed leading to an even higher risk of electrical fire.

Switch off appliances when not in use

Switch off any electrical appliances that you aren't using at the wall, especially at night. If your socket doesn't have a switch, simply pull out the plug. Take extra careful with hand-held heated appliances such as irons, hair dryers and styling wands. Make sure they are switched off, unplugged and have cooled down completely before putting them away.

Take care when charging mobile phones and other devices

NEVER use a damaged cable to charge your phone or other rechargeable device. Do not

leave items charging overnight or unattended, and NEVER leave them charging on the carpet, bed or on any other soft furnishings.

Water and electricity can be lethal

NEVER take mains-powered appliances or extension leads into the bathroom or let plugs and cables get wet in the kitchen or garden.

NEVER use a plug or switch – or operate a mains-powered appliance – if you have wet hands as wet skin reduces the body's resistance to electric shock.

NEVER cover the air vents on electrical appliances

The air vents on electrical appliances are there to stop them from overheating. If you cover them with anything, they may overheat and catch fire. This is particularly important with fan heaters and storage heaters.

Don't tamper with faulty appliances

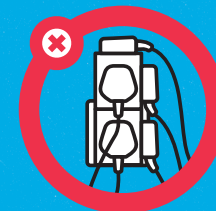
Don't use, or try to repair faulty appliances. Even when switched off and unplugged they can still cause an electric shock. Leave it to the experts and call a qualified electrician.

Leave plenty of space around your electric meter

Always keep the area around your fusebox or electric meter easily accessible in case of emergency, and clear of all obstructions – especially those that could catch fire.

Safety at a glance

Don't overload your electric sockets



Don't leave cables trailing across the floor



Always switch off appliances when not in use



NEVER touch electrical items with wet hands



If you have any questions or concerns call our dedicated electrical safety helpline

Gas safety for tenants

Following these simple gas safety tips can help prevent the risk of gas leaks, fires or explosions, and carbon monoxide poisoning

Gas is the UK's most popular fuel for heating and cooking. It's great when everything is working properly, but can quickly become dangerous when it's not. So these gas safety tips might save you, and your family's lives.

Get your annual gas safety checks

These are to ensure your gas appliances are safe and working properly, and NBCC will do these for you. All you need to do is make it easy for us to carry out these checks. Help us by replying quickly to NBBC to arrange a visit, keeping to appointments, and by letting us know when you can't be there to let us in.



Be aware of the danger of Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide can kill. It is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that can be emitted by faulty gas appliances. That's why NBBC are installing audible CO detectors throughout our buildings. If we haven't fitted yours yet, contact NBBC at the number below.

Don't tamper with your CO detector

Do not paint or cover your CO detector. Do not try to disconnect it or tamper with it.

Don't leave the gas switched on

NEVER leave a cooker or fire switched on with the gas unlit. Make sure the flame doesn't go out whilst the gas is still turned on.

Check your gas appliances are working properly

Healthy gas flames should be blue and crisp. Lazy yellow flames, dark sooty marks around appliances and unusual or unexpected sounds coming from your appliances are all warning signs that something isn't right.

If you notice any of these signs, contact NBBC.

DO NOT tamper with, or try to adjust or repair gas appliances yourself.

What does gas smell like?

Natural gas is normally odourless, but for your safety Mercaptan – which is a non-toxic artificial smell – is added. This gives gas a strong and distinctive sulphur-like smell which is easy to detect, yet completely harmless.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SMELL GAS

- Open all doors and windows to ventilate the area
- SWITCH OFF all gas appliances
- EXTINGUISH all naked flames
- DO NOT SMOKE
- DO NOT operate any electrical appliances or switches – including light switches – as sparks may ignite leaking gas

Report the gas leak

Call the 24-hour National Gas Emergency Helpline immediately on **0800 111 999**

What to do if you feel unwell after a gas leak

If you feel light-headed, dizzy, nauseous or have a headache, get outside into the fresh air as quickly as you can and call your GP or the hospital and tell them you may have been exposed to Carbon Monoxide.

Safety at a glance

Don't leave the gas switched on without a flame



Make sure you have an audible CO alarm fitted



Don't use any switches if you smell gas



Report gas leaks IMMEDIATELY using the NGE 24-hour Helpline



If you have any questions or concerns call our dedicated electrical safety helpline

Water safety for tenants

Protect your family against water-borne bacteria, disease and illness by following these water safety guidelines

There are several water-borne bacteria, but the one you've probably heard of is legionella.

Sometimes found in unused taps and stagnant water supplies, this bacteria causes Legionnaire's disease which is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia. Anybody can be infected by this disease by breathing in contaminated water drops or mist, but it mainly affects those who are more vulnerable due to age, smoking or existing illness.

NBBC carries out regular monthly checks where water is stored in our buildings, and you can help too by following our water safety guidelines.

Regularly run water through taps and showerheads

Regular use of taps and showerheads prevents water stagnating. If not in regular use, you should turn taps and showerheads on for a few minutes every couple of days.

Clean your showerhead frequently

Not only will this help prevent water stagnating, it will also keep your shower in good working order. For additional safety, unscrew the showerhead and leave it to soak in disinfectant for a few minutes.

Turn on your taps when you return from holiday

If you've been away for more than 48 hours, run water through all your taps for at least five minutes before using them. If you've been on a longer holiday, do this for ten minutes or so and soak your showerhead in disinfectant for several hours.

Take care using garden hose pipes

Because hose pipes are used less frequently than taps, it is important to run water through them for at least five minutes before each use.

Do not alter boiler settings

Do not change water temperature settings on your boiler as these will have been set a level to protect your safety.



Asbestos safety

Exposure to asbestos poses a serious risk to health

Asbestos was widely used for its strength and fire-resistant properties to reinforce and protect building materials from heat up until 1999. So it's likely to be present in the construction of many of our buildings.

When mixed or sealed with other materials, asbestos remains safe, but if it is disturbed and its fibres are released into the air it can cause serious health risks if breathed in.

Do not carry out DIY work which disturbs the fabric of the building

Painting and decorating, and hanging picture frames is perfectly safe, but anything that disturbs the fabric of the building – drilling into walls for example – risks exposing asbestos.

You should always contact NBBC before carrying out any such work.

Report asbestos immediately

If you think you've disturbed asbestos in your home, do not touch it. Report it immediately using the asbestos reporting line.

asbestos reporting line

024 7637 6376

Safety at a glance

Use taps and showerheads frequently



Clean your showerhead regularly



Don't alter water boiler settings



If you find asbestos report it immediately



If you have any questions or concerns call our dedicated electrical safety helpline

water safety helpline **024 7637 6376**

fire safety helpline

024 7637 6376

www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/firesafety

electrical safety helpline

024 7637 6376

www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/electricalsafety

gas safety helpline

024 7637 6376

www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/gassafety

water safety helpline

024 7637 6376

www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/watersafety

asbestos reporting line

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