

Safety & Efficiency

Many of the problems that can occur in the home may be avoided. Here is some simple advice about how to take care of your home and ensure your family's safety.

Make sure you know where the following can be found in your home:

- Electricity meter
- Gas meter and tap
- Cold water stop tap
- Fuse board and isolation/trip switch

If you are having problems locating any of these please let us know and we will arrange for someone to advise you or show you.

Electricity

All electrical systems have fuses or circuit breakers that will cut out if the system is either overloaded or a faulty appliance such as a microwave, washing machine etc is in operation.

- Unplug the appliances when not in use
- Do not wire more than one appliance to a single plug
- Do not plug appliances into light fittings
- Avoid taking electrical appliances into the bathroom
- Never touch anything electrical with wet hands
- Always ensure that the correct fuses are used
- Check flexes regularly, do not use damaged ones
- Do not run electrical wiring under the carpet or rugs

Electrical Fuses And Circuit Breakers

All electrical systems have fuses or circuit breakers that will blow when the system is overloaded, cutting off the supply of electricity.

To reconnect the supply, disconnect the appliance you think caused the fault then switch the circuit breaker back on. Fuses will need to be replaced if they blow. It is your responsibility to change fuses. When changing fuses make sure the mains are switched off first and ensure the correctly rated fuse wire is used.

Gas

If you smell gas:

- Do not smoke
- Turn off gas cookers and fires and anything else with a naked flame
- Do not use a match
- Do not use electrical switches
- Open all doors and window
- Check to see if a gas tap has been left on or a pilot light has gone out

If you think there is a gas or carbon monoxide leak, turn off the gas supply at the meter and telephone National Grid immediately on 0800 111 999.

Inform us as soon as possible afterwards in case we need to attend to a repair.

Carbon Monoxide

When gas does not burn properly it creates carbon monoxide. You cannot taste, smell or see it but carbon monoxide is very dangerous and extremely toxic.

Carbon monoxide can poison. Symptoms include tiredness, drowsiness, headaches, chest and stomach pains, nausea or vomiting. Heavy doses of carbon monoxide will cause a person to collapse and even die. We check the gas supply and the appliances we provide in your home every year but we do not check your own appliances.

You can help yourself by remembering these simple rules:

- Never block air vents on appliances
- Never block outside grilles, flues or airbricks
- Do not use faulty appliances
- Watch out for soot, stains and pilot lights that blow out regularly
- Always follow the appliance instructions, only use them for the purpose they were designed for
- Never 'do it yourself' with gas. Always use gas safe registered workers to fit and service your gas appliances and make sure they are safely fastened to the wall
- Always let our contractors into your home to carry out annual checks
- Do not sleep in living room with a back boiler or gas fire

Fire Prevention

You can reduce the risk of fire by taking the following precautions:

- Use candles in the home very carefully, do not leave them unattended
- Never fill a pan of oil more than one-third full or leave cooking unattended
- If a pan of oil begins to smoke turn off the heat and leave to cool
- Always make sure cigarettes are properly put out
- Keep matches away from children
- Do not use portable gas or paraffin heaters (unless supplied by us)
- Ensure that all fires are guarded
- Do not prop fire doors open or interfere with them or any other fire safety equipment
- Do not dry clothes by hanging them around cookers, fires or on electronic heaters
- Close all doors at night and when you go out
- Fit smoke alarms if you don't already have them, clean them as per the manufacturer's instructions, test them regularly and change batteries as soon as they are flat

What To Do If The Following Occurs:

If a chip pan catches fire:

- Only if it is safe, turn off the heat source
- Run a tea towel under a tap and wring out
- Cover pan with the damp tea towel or cloth to smother the flames
- Do not try to put it out with water
- Never try to move the pan
- Leave the pan cool for at least 30 minutes

If someone's clothing catches fire:

- Lay the person on the ground, roll them up in a rug or a very large piece of heavy fabric such as a curtain to put out the flames and call an ambulance.

If your home catches fire:

- Get everyone out of the building
- If possible close all doors behind you
- Call the fire service on 999
- Do not stop to collect your belongings

Frost Precautions

Before winter check that all your water pipes and tanks are lagged and insulated. If they are not, please let us know.

How to avoid your pipes freezing

- Make sure taps are turned off when not in use
- If you are out during the day have the heating on very low about 10°C or 50°F or leave radiator valves slightly open
- Report any dripping taps or running overflows to us for repair
- If you are leaving your house empty in the winter leave your heating on low to prevent freezing and burst pipes

What to do if your pipes freeze or a pipe bursts in your home:

- Turn off the main stopcock and switch the central heating and immersion heater off.
- In flats sometimes the main supply is in the communal area, when you first move in you need to find the location of your stopcock.
- Turn all hot and cold taps on, to drain as much water out of the pipes as possible.
- Switch off the time clock on the central heating boiler.
- Report the problem to us as soon as possible.
- If a pipe bursts do your best to stop the leak until a plumber can get out.
- If the leak is from a joint try to put the pipe back in the joint and tie it tightly with a rag.
- If the pipe is split fill it with something such as plasticine or soap.
- Put something underneath to catch the water.
- If water leaks through a ceiling light do not switch electricity on.

Security

- Always lock and close all doors and windows when you go out.
- Remove any address labels on your keys which would identify your home.
- Do not leave your key under a doormat or on string from the letterbox. Thieves always look in these places for keys.
- Always ask for identification from callers before you let them in your home.
- If you live in flats with a door entry phone, never prop the main door open and ensure the door has shut securely behind you.

If you want more information about home security contact your local police. They will also be able to inform you about Neighbourhood Watch Schemes in your area or how to go about setting one up.

Keys

We do not keep a spare set of keys to your home.

If you do lose your keys you are responsible for regaining entry to your home. If we have to arrange for locks to be changed, or a door forced or a window broken you will be charged for damage.

Asbestos Advice

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that has been used in the past in a range of building materials to make them more rigid and fire resistant. It has also been used in household products such as ironing boards and oven gloves.

Asbestos was used extensively as a building material in Great Britain from the 1950s through to mid 1980s. Since then, its use has been phased out, and is non-existent in today's products.

Under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 the Association has a legal responsibility that any asbestos containing materials within our homes are managed effectively. To ensure that we comply with this regulation we may from time to time need to carry out a survey of your home. We will provide access to the asbestos register should you require it and we will also provide any necessary advice.

As a guide if you live in a home built more than 15 years ago, you may find asbestos in some areas of the home such as:

- Leaves, gutter and rainwater down pipes
- Garage and shed roofs
- Linings for walls, ceilings and doors
- Insulation panels in some storage heaters
- Bath panels
- Central heating flues
- Floor tiles
- Textured ceiling coatings (Artex)

What to do if you think you have asbestos in your home

If we know that asbestos exists in your home we will tell you. It is very hard to identify asbestos, but if you suspect that you are living with asbestos don't panic and leave asbestos alone, **it's safe unless it's damaged or disturbed.**

If you are planning to do any alterations to your home you should always contact us for permission before starting work. If you suspect asbestos exists, or you come across it once you have started work in your home you must contact us straight away. Do not continue with the work until we have checked it.

You should:

- Never sand, drill or saw asbestos materials
- Always seek professional advice before thinking of removing asbestos materials
- Do not attempt to remove asbestos lagging, spray coatings or insulation board by yourself. These materials can only be safely removed by a licensed contractor.

If in doubt – contact us straight away.

How To Reduce Condensation In The Home

Most complaints about dampness are caused by condensation. Bathrooms and kitchens tend to suffer from condensation, which occurs when air with moisture in meets a cold surface such as windows and outside walls. If allowed to build up, it can damage your decorations and cause mould to grow.

You can reduce condensation in a number of ways:

- Do not leave kettles or pans boiling if you don't need to.
- Open windows or outside doors when cooking and close the internal kitchen door.
- Open the bathroom window after use.
- When drying clothes in the house always open a window.
- Use extractor fans when possible.
- Do not block vents or air bricks.
- Do not use paraffin or bottled gas heaters (unless supplied by us).
- Central heating helps to keep the air and surfaces warm to reduce condensation.
- Leave the heating on low for longer periods. It is better to have background heating than have the heating on high for periods in the day.
- Where possible keep beds and wardrobes away from outside walls.

Energy Saving Advice

Here are some simple measures to save energy in your home.

Heating And Water

- Turning your thermostat down by 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10 per cent and save you around £40 per year.
- Is your water too hot? Your cylinder thermostat shouldn't need to be set higher than 60°C/140°F.
- Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows.
- Only boil as much water as you need (but remember to cover the elements if you're using an electric kettle).
- A dripping hot water tap wastes energy and in one week wastes enough hot water to fill half a bath, so fix leaking taps and make sure they're fully turned off!
- Toilets are one of the main users of water in the home. If you have a dual flush cistern, use the shorter flush when possible (for a short quick flush press down the handle and release straight away).
- Use the plug and fill the sink with water when shaving rather than leave the tap running.
- Do not leave the tap running while brushing your teeth or washing your hands.
- Instead of running the tap for drinking, chill a jug of water and keep it in the fridge.
- Use a bowl rather than the sink for washing or preparing vegetables.
- When you use the bath you can save water by not over filling it.

Electricity/Gas

- Always turn off the lights when you leave a room. (Although be wary of leaving hazardous areas unnecessarily dark).
- Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave appliances on charge unnecessarily.
- If you're not filling up the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher, use the half-load or economy programme.
- Washing at 30°C rather than normal temperatures means you use 40% less electricity.
- Replace your light bulbs with energy saving recommended ones: just one can reduce your lighting costs by up to £100 over the lifetime of the bulb – and they last up to 12 times longer than ordinary light bulbs.
- Try and keep saucepan at a lower level whilst the food will cook quicker and more evenly (and you will reduce the amount of condensation produced).

Outside

- Add organic matter like compost, manure or leaf mould to help soil retain moisture.
- Help soil retain water by covering the surface of soil around your plants with either gravel, bark chips, lawn clippings or compost, especially in pits as they are prone to drying.
- Avoid watering your lawn if possible. Even dead looking lawns will spring back in heavy rain.
- Dig a basin around trees and shrubs to collect water.
- Group plants according to their water requirements, so if additional water is needed you can limit this to just the areas that need it. Water storing granules can be used in pots and tubs. Ensure beds are level to prevent water run-off.
- Avoid using a hose or sprinkler, they can use up to 1000 litres of water an hour.
- Use a watering can and focus water where it is most needed. The best time to water is early morning or evenings. Water less frequently but deeply and thoroughly this will help plants to develop healthy deep root systems.
- Use dishwater in the garden, it is also good for fending off aphids (parasites that can harm your plants).
- Collect rain water in a water butt. This can be plumbed into your existing guttering and down-pipes. (You must get approval from us first).
- Use a bucket, sponge and watering can instead of a hose when washing your car.

For more information on saving energy in the house visit the Energy Saving Trust Website at www.est.org.uk

Renewable Energy Provisions

i.e.

- Rainwater harvesting system
- Solar hot water system
- Solar PV installed

If you have any renewable provisions fitted at your property we would like to take this opportunity to clarify that these systems are not essential to ensuring you are supplied with adequate water/electricity/heating.

We hope that these systems will result in a cost saving for our tenants, but we do not guarantee this, and cannot recompense where it is felt that cost savings have not been achieved.

We do reserve the right to decommission such facilities where they are not fit for purpose, without any compensation to the tenant.