

## FIREFIGHTER'S TIPS FOR FIRE DOOR INSTALLATION AND USE

There are some simple must-knows when it comes to fire doors and their safe use and installation:

### DO...

1. Get accredited professionals to install your fire doors.
2. Check your door's certification – look for British Standard (BS) Parts 22 and 31 or BS EN 1154.
3. Make sure there are combines smoke and fire seals around the door.
4. Check the handles close properly.
5. Make sure that seals and other components like letter boxes are fire-safe too.
6. Make sure you have appropriate door closure mechanisms – the wrong 'closers' can physically damage frames and hinges through slamming.

### DON'T...

1. Prop them open or let your people prop them open – doors can save lives if they are shut.

2. Install fire doors yourself – the components and seals are as important as the door itself.
3. Let tenants replace fire doors if your building is a block of flats.
4. Remove the self-closing device fitted to the door.
5. Leave damaged doors in use – always have them repaired or replaced ASAP.

### WHAT ABOUT OLD DOORS – ARE THEY OK?

There is a difference between modern fire doors and their requirements and older type doors, often called 'Notional fire doors'. These doors may have been in place for many years and met earlier standards of manufacture and legislation. However, this doesn't mean that they are now not fit for purpose, providing they are still in good condition they will still provide the service for which they were intended.

**2,595 Mesothelioma deaths in 2016, with a similar number of lung cancer deaths linked to past exposure to asbestos.**

Source: Health & Safety Executive website – Summary statistics for Great Britain 2018



## BREXIT GUIDANCE

Health and safety protections, and your duties to protect the health and safety of people, will not change with Brexit. There have been some minor governmental amendments to regulations to remove EU references but legal requirements, and the protections these provide, will be the same as they are now.

After Brexit, you should continue to manage your business and employees in a proportionate way to reduce risk and to protect people and the environment. Your obligations to protect people's health and safety will not change with Brexit.

## DIRECTOR SENTENCED FOR UNREGISTERED GAS WORK

Aylesbury Crown Court heard how Mr Stevens purported to be Gas Safe registered when he undertook gas work at two properties in Milton Keynes between 2015 and 2016. He brandished a t-shirt with the Gas Safe logo, which was also on the company van. Mr Stevens was reported to Gas Safe Register after defects were found in the installation of a gas boiler.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Mr Stevens was not Gas Safe registered at the time he conducted this work.

Mr Stevens of Reynolds Place, Grange Farm, Milton Keynes, was found guilty of four offences under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998. Mr Stevens

was ordered to do 300 hours of community service and pay costs of £15,000.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Andrew McGill said, "Mr Stevens undertook gas work which he knew he was not registered to do".

"HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate action against rogue gas fitters who disregard the law and place lives at risk. Working with gas appliances is difficult, specialised and potentially very dangerous, so it is vital that this is only undertaken by trained and competent engineers who are registered with Gas Safe."

Further information about gas safety can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas>

### TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT HEALTH & SAFETY

The most common area requiring action from our health & safety reports relates to **Section 10 – Workplace.**

This section covers several areas including:

- ▶ Missing safety signage, e.g. fire action notices, fire door keep locked and do not use the lift in the event of a fire.
- ▶ Slip, trip & fall hazard, e.g. uneven surfaces on pathways and cracked access steps etc.
- ▶ Missing or damaged handrails, e.g. missing balustrades and missing handrails along unprotected edges.

- ▶ Inadequate lighting, e.g. in car park and bin areas.
- ▶ General obstacles in the circulation areas, e.g. poor storage and damaged trees.

We encourage property managers to accompany us on property inspections. This process gives us the opportunity to highlight these areas. Our photographic evidence should be enough to make our point as we like to include two photographs per hazard.

## MEANS OF ESCAPE

A key duty of those responsible for managing premises that are open to the public – for example, shopping centres & offices – is to ensure proper evacuation measures for all employees, visitors, and, especially, the mobility-impaired. Failure to do so can land the duty-holder in court to face serious charges, including corporate manslaughter in workplace cases.

Multi-storey buildings present several challenges, the most obvious ones being the potential distance to be covered and number of stairs to be negotiated to exit the building.

**The management of escape routes is paramount to good fire safety. Poor practices such as combustible storage on landings and in fire lobbies should be discouraged.**

### What should be covered in your EMERGENCY PLAN?

A simple emergency plan must show that you have:

1. A suitable fire detection system, if applicable.
2. A clear understanding of who calls 999.
3. A clear passageway to all escape routes.
4. Suitable routes and exits for people to escape.
5. Clearly marked escape routes – these should be as short and direct as possible.
6. Emergency doors that open easily – and emergency lighting if it is needed.
7. Providing training so your employees know how to use the escape routes
8. Set out a safe meeting point for staff.
9. Considered the needs of anyone who might not be able to escape quickly if there's a fire.



## GRENFELL INQUIRY FACES LENGTHY DELAY

The first phase of the inquiry concluded in January 2019 but the judge leading the inquiry, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, warned that the next phase of hearings is unlikely to start earlier than the end of 2019 and more likely the following year. The next phase is expected to look at the circumstances and decisions leading up to the tragic fire and more than 200,000 documents will need to be examined before the hearings can continue.

Sir Moore-Bick has said that the sheer volume of documents that need to be examined will cause the next phase of hearings to be delayed. In closing statements for phase one of the inquiry, Sir

Moore-Bick said: "Phase 2 we can focus our attention on the critical circumstances and decisions which enabled such a devastating event to occur. I am pleased to confirm that work on Phase 2 has already been going on for several months.

"The inquiry expects to disclose 200,000 documents to the core participants and is about to start to do so. The work won't be complete until Autumn next year. There are many documents which will need to be reviewed, redacted and digested. There are lots to do and its likely to identify new questions. The investigation must be thorough and work takes time".

### FOCUS ON THE DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

The objective of the document checklist is to provide maintenance check information before we visit your property.

The process does add administrative time for your staff but ensures you have evidence of the key maintenance checks, when they were last conducted and by whom. Examples include:

- ▶ Fixed electrical checks were conducted on 1st February 2018 by Murphy Electrical (five yearly).
- ▶ The six-monthly passenger lift checks were conducted on 2nd April 2019 by Zurich (six monthly).

This process provides key information for the risk assessment reports.

## Fire Brigade outlines how to make buildings safer

In its submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Brigade is calling for:

- ▶ Automatic fire suppression systems to be fitted in several buildings including all-purpose built blocks of flats (or all blocks over six storeys at the very least), all homes where vulnerable people live and all care homes and sheltered accommodation blocks.
- ▶ Appropriate means of escape in the event of a fire, especially for people who are disabled.
- ▶ That the design of a building restricts the potential for external fire spread regardless of its height or use.
- ▶ Clearer detail of the types of buildings the guidance can be applied to.
- ▶ A full review of firefighting access and facilities, such as fire hydrants and firefighting lifts.

The Brigade is warning that whilst changes to ADB are crucial, the Government also needs to urgently address wider issues including the competency of all who use the guidance.

### Approved Document B

**Approved Document B (ADB) sets the standards for building fire safety and is used to develop designs for many new and refurbished buildings.**



## OUR RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

We have a five-step process to ensure our reports are robust and useful to you, our residential and commercial property management clients.

### STEP 01

Our starting point is to collect useful information about the maintenance checks in place. We strongly encourage the use of our document checklist; our pre-visit information gathering tool.

### STEP 02

We aim to visit your property at the next available date and access as many areas as possible. You are welcome to join us on the property visits.

### STEP 03

Our goal is to issue our property reports within a short space of time; residential property reports (3 working days) and commercial property reports (5 working days). All reports are issued in WORD and PDF formats.

### STEP 04

As of January 2019, we include a block risk assessment summary with the normal reports. This Excel spreadsheet lists the identified actions, page references and timescales. This gives you a workable document and allows us to build your portfolio risk assessment summary.

### STEP 05

From December 2019, we will issue your annual review report. It will summarise the properties we have inspected that year, highlight the common issues and raise awareness on the properties requiring the most attention.

## ADVICE FOR RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

Fire safety within the home and in commercial property is an important issue, especially;

- ▶ in shared premises, such as houses in multiple occupation, where common areas are shared,
- ▶ in shared houses and blocks of flats where unrelated occupiers, who live independently from one another, share common areas and escape routes from the same building.

Key guidance can be found at:

- ▶ LACORS: Housing Fire Safety,
- ▶ Local Government Group: Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats,
- ▶ HM Government Guide to Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Sleeping Accommodation,
- ▶ Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005,
- ▶ Housing Act 2004.

