FIRE & SAFETY BULLETIN

dpmaree health+safety

www.dpmaree.com

ISSUE 23 : Summer 2025

WAKING WATCH REPLACEMENT FUND 2023
EXTENDED BY GOVERNMENT

The Government has announced that the £20.6 million Waking Watch Replacement Fund 2023 will be extended to March 2026, with up to £21.11 million of additional funds being made available to support the installation of a common alarm system, replacing Waking Watch measures in all residential buildings where such a system is currently in place in England, regardless of where the costs of the Waking Watch fall.

This announcement builds on the £35 million Waking Watch Relief Fund, which was focused on high-rise residential buildings (above 17.7 metres tall) with a Waking Watch in place (at cost to leaseholders) due to unsafe cladding, and the £27 million Waking Watch Replacement Fund 2022, which expanded eligibility to residential buildings of any height with a waking watch in place due to any fire safety defect.

The £41.71 million Waking Watch Replacement Fund 2023 extends financial support to more buildings and is aligned with guidance published by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) on buildings that change from a 'Stay Put' to a simultaneous evacuation-focused fire safety strategy.

Those who stand to benefit from this Westminster announcement include leaseholders who may have faced high costs or delays in the implementation of interim safety measures by providing financial support and delivering a better and more long-term fire safety system in their buildings.

The Waking Watch Replacement Fund 2023 will be administered centrally by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to all eligible buildings.

WHAT ARE FIRE DOORS AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Fire doors are an important element of your fire safety strategy. Used correctly, they stop fires from spreading through a building, giving people time to escape and the Brigade time to attend and potentially save your premises.

WHAT SIGNAGE IS NEEDED FOR THE PREMISES INFORMATION BOX (PIB)

A square or rectangular sing, bearing the words “PIB for Fire and Rescue Service Use Only” should be fixed to the door of the PIB enclosure. The wording should comprise white Sans Serif text, on a red background, with a lower-case letter height of at least 100mm. The sign should be of metal or traffolyte construction and should be fixed to the door of the cabinet by rivets, or at least four security screws, or by a security adhesive.

FLAT FIRE - HANWELL

THURSDAY 10TH APRIL 2025 AT 6.15PM

Ten fire engines and around 70 firefighters responded to a fire on Copley Close, Hanwell.

The fire was located in a block of flats consisting of five floors. A split-level flat on the third and fourth floors was alight. There are no reports of any injuries at this time.

Traffic in the surrounding area is likely to be impacted as crews remain on scene into the evening.

The Brigade received over ten calls reporting the fire, with the first call taken at 615pm. Control officers mobilised crews from Ealing, Southall, Wembley and surrounding fire stations to the scene. Firefighters were able to bring the incident under control by 742pm.

The cause of the fire is under investigation by the Brigade’s Fire Investigation Team.

FLAT FIRE - WHITECHAPEL

THURSDAY 10TH APRIL 2025 AT 8.04AM

Firefighters are issuing a reminder about using e-bikes safely following a fire in a flat on Whitechapel Road in Whitechapel.

The fire occurred in a flat, ranging over three floors, situated above of a shop. Half of the flat on the second floor was damaged by fire. The remainder of the second floor and whole of the third floor was damaged by smoke.

Three people who were inside the flat were rescued from the roof by firefighters using a 32-m turntable ladder to bring them safely down. Six other people left the flat before firefighters arrived via an internal staircase. Nine people were assessed at the scene by London Ambulance Service crews and two people were taken to hospital to be treated for smoke inhalation as a precaution.

The fire is being treated as accidental and is believed to have been caused by the failure of a lithium-ion battery pack, most likely used for a converted e-bike.

Tony Jackson, Station Commander at Whitechapel Fire Station, said: “Firefighters worked professionally to bring three people to safety and ensure that no one was seriously hurt in this fire.

Products, such as batteries, chargers and conversion kits, that are purchased from online marketplaces are at greater risk of malfunctioning. At this time, there is not the same level of regulation of products for e-bikes and e-scooters sold via online marketplaces or auction sites when compared to high street shops, so the Brigade cannot be confident that products meet the correct safety standard.

WHY ASBESTOS IS DANGEROUS AND WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND

Asbestos is not just a problem of the past. It can be present today in any building built or refurbished before 2000.

You cannot see, smell or feel the fibres in the air or on your clothes, so you do not know they are there.

When materials that contain asbestos are disturbed or damaged, fibres are released into the air. When people inhale these fibres, they can cause serious diseases which cannot be cured.

These diseases will not affect you immediately – they often take a long time to develop. But once you have been diagnosed it is often too late to do anything.

HERE ARE 5 "TOP TIPS" TO IMPROVE YOUR RISK ASSESSMENT:

1. Ensure the escape routes are clear of combustible and flammable materials. Photos always provided.
2. Ensure that only pictures along the escape routes are glass fronted units and safely secured to the wall. Reducing flame spread along the escape route is essential.
3. Ensure maintenance procedures are in place and, where appropriate, premises logbooks are completed.
4. Ensure your emergency procedures are clear and obvious. If there is a "stay put" policy, a copy should be given to each resident annually.
5. Ensure portable appliance testing is completed on all single-phase electrical equipment (three-pin plugs) with labelling clearly visible on each device.

RISKS FROM POWERED GATES

Powered gates can give rise to a number of significant hazards:

- hit by the moving gate
- crushed against fixed and / or other moving parts
- caught on moving parts, e.g., gears
- electrocuted
- affected by hydraulic or pneumatic parts, where these are present

Most powered gates are located outside where the weather can affect safety at any time, e.g.:

- they can fall or be blown over
- rotate uncontrollable around hinges
- they may run freely off tracks if not restrained
- water ingress or damage to cabling, control boxes and the connections

Hazards may also arise during work on them, e.g.:

- they may drop or move unexpectedly if not adequately restrained
- hydraulic and pneumatic components may have residual stored energy, and so move unexpectedly when disconnected
- the disconnection of safety devices while still 'live' may result in a significant uncontrolled crushing / trapping risk
- from being left in an unsafe condition, such as failing to properly set the safety features

Powered gates must be:

- properly designed, taking into account their location, weather conditions that may affect them and foreseeable misuse
- manufactured to the safety standards required by law
- supplied with a complete set of documentation, including User Instructions for the complete product
- installed and maintained by competent contractors regularly checked.

CONTRACTOR SENTENCED
AFTER UNCONTROLLED SPREAD OF ASBESTOS

A self-employed roofing contractor has been ordered to undertake unpaid work after the uncontrolled spread of asbestos in a back garden, putting two young workers and local residents at risk.

Stephen Wilks, trading as S Wilks Roofing, pleaded guilty to breaching asbestos safety regulations after work carried out under his control led to the contamination of a residential area with asbestos-containing materials.

The court heard how Mr Wilks had been commissioned by a property management company to replace asbestos cement roof sheets on three garages off Green Walk in Bowden, Altrincham in February 2022.

Health & Safety Executive (HSE) began an investigation after a local resident raised concerns about debris that had fallen into their garden during the work. Analysis confirmed the debris contained chrysotile asbestos.

HSE inspectors discovered ripped bags of asbestos waste stored in a publicly accessible area in front of the garages, with asbestos-containing materials spilling onto the ground and contaminating nearby undergrowth. Further investigation revealed that residents' personal belongings stored in the garages had also been contaminated.

HSE's campaign "Asbestos and You" reminds tradespeople about the dangers of asbestos and the importance of working safely with it. The regulator also provides comprehensive guidance for workers and employers about working safely with asbestos on its website – www.hse.gov.uk. This includes information on how to identify asbestos, what to do if you find it, and the appropriate safety measures needed when working with or around asbestos-containing materials.

The property management company subsequently arranged for a licensed asbestos removal contractor to safely collect the waste and thoroughly clean the affected areas.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD LADDERS BE CHECKED?

Responsible Persons need to make sure that any ladder or stepladder are both suitable for the task and in a safe condition before use.

Only use ladders or stepladders that show no visible defects if stored in the common areas. Such ladders or stepladders should be secured in place to prevent unauthorised use and hence prevent an accident.

The ladders or stepladders used in the common areas should have a formal inspection every 3-6 months conducted by a competent person. Records should be kept.

COMMON FIRE ISSUES WHEN CONVERTING COMMERCIAL UNITS TO A BLOCK OF FLATS; FIRE DOORS, COMPARTMENTATION AND SIGNAGE.

OUR RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

We have a specific process to ensure our reports are of value to you:

1. Our starting point is to collect information about the management checks in place via our document checklist;
2. We aim to visit your property at the next available date and access as many areas as possible, including a sample number of flat entrance doors;
3. Our goal is to issue your reports within 3 working days; and
4. We include a block summary sheet with our reports. This quick reference sheet lists the required actions, report references and timescales.

dpmaree health+safety

Contact us for further information
07946 059552

www.dpmaree.com
e: dom@dpmaree.com
l: uk.linkedin.com/in/dommaree/