

Safety in your home

What you need to know



Your safety is a priority for us. We want to keep you as safe as possible. Below is some information to keep you safe in your home.

FIRE SAFETY

Fire safety is a really important issue that every tenant needs to take seriously. Never tamper with fire safety equipment as this could risk your life.

Smoke and heat alarms should be tested weekly. Press the test button for 10 seconds, the alarm will sound loudly, so that you know the alarm is working. Ensure that your detectors and sprinkler heads (if fitted) are clear and unobstructed.

Be prepared by making a plan of escape and make sure everyone knows how to escape. Make sure exits are kept clear - the best route is the normal way in and out of your home. Think of a second route in case the first one is blocked. Take a few minutes to practise your escape plan. Review your plan if the layout of your home changes.

If your doors and windows are key operated ensure that the keys are easily accessed. Make sure that everyone staying in the house knows where the keys are.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Always check that you use the right fuse to prevent overheating.

Make sure an electrical appliance has a British or European safety mark when you buy it.

Certain appliances, such as washing machines, should have a single plug to themselves, as they are high powered.

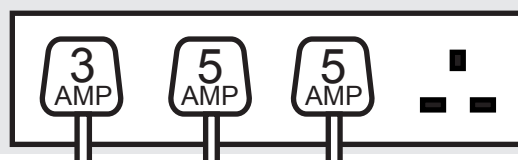
Try and keep to one plug per socket.

When charging electrical goods, follow the manufacturer's instructions and look for the CE mark that indicates chargers comply with European safety standards.

Know the limit

An extension lead or adaptor will have a limit to how many amps it can take, so be careful **not to overload them** to reduce the risk of a fire.

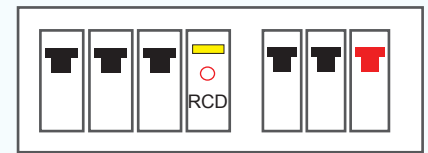
13 AMP EXTENSION LEAD



Fixed Wiring Installations

Check Residual Current Device (RCD's) if fitted.

To check if you have fixed RCD protection, go to your consumer unit (electric board with either trip switches or fuses) and have a look to see if there is a device with a push button marked 'T' or 'Test'. This 'test' button is part of an RCD. If an RCD is fitted, there should also be a label on or near the consumer unit stating 'test quarterly'. Please contact us if you don't have a fixed RCD or would like to discuss any issues regarding the electrical installation in your home.



An RCD is a life-saving device which is designed to prevent you from getting a fatal electric shock if you touch something live, such as a bare wire. It can also provide some protection against electrical fires.

In common with other Social Landlords we schedule 5 year electrical tests. **You need to allow us access to do this** When we've completed a test, we leave a sticker on the consumer unit telling you when the next test is due. If you don't have a sticker on the unit or if you think that your electrical installation test is overdue contact us to make an appointment.

Our electrical team are registered with the approved operator, NICEIC. If you have an electrician doing work in your home, for example as part of an approved alteration, they should be registered with a Government Approved Electrical Competent Person Scheme Operator.

Further advice on electrical safety and information for tenants can be found on the Electrical Safety First web site: www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guides-and-advice/around-the-home/

ASBESTOS

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral. Because of its excellent fire resistant and insulating properties, it was widely used in the building industry until the mid 1980s. Any building built before 2000 could have asbestos in it.

When asbestos containing materials are disturbed or damaged, they release fibres into the air, which if inhaled, can cause serious disease. The use of asbestos products are now banned, but asbestos materials are still in many homes – **providing they are in good condition and are not broken or damaged they present a low risk, although they all hazardous.**

Products like asbestos cement sheets or flooring tiles, where the asbestos is tightly mixed and packed with another material, are less hazardous than products such as pipe lagging where fibres can easily come out, but all products need careful handling by trained workers.

Where might you find asbestos in a building?

- roof - roof felt and artificial slates
- boilers and pipework, ropes and seal and back boards
- ceilings usually texture coating (**Artex**) but some base materials where asbestos containing material is used instead of plasterboard.
- interior walls and panels, asbestos cement boards and textured coating (Artex)
- floor tiles and glue

Asbestos dust/fibres are fine in texture, and invisible to the naked eye. As such, work with asbestos may either be undertaken by a licensed contractor or specially trained MVH employees adhering to stringent precautions to avoid risks and contamination.

If you think you have found or disturbed asbestos, contact us immediately.

LEGIONELLA

Legionella is a bacteria, found in natural water sources such as rivers and reservoirs where it is harmless. However, it can also survive in purpose-built water systems including hot and cold water systems.

If the conditions are favourable, the bacteria can grow which increases the risks of serious illness, therefore good maintenance of water systems can prevent the disease.

Conditions that are ideal for legionella bacteria are:

- 1** The water temperature in all or any part of the system is 20-45°C (body temperature is ideal)
- 2** There is a potential for stagnation or low use
- 3** Water droplets are capable of being produced and that they can be dispersed eg. showers and aerosols
- 4** There are deposits that can support bacteria growth for example rust, sludge or scale.

Legionnaires' Disease is a pneumonia-like infection which is caused by breathing in water particles which contain legionella bacteria. There are no known cases of person-to-person spread and it usually takes 2-10 days to develop **symptoms which are typically flu-like, often with breathing difficulties and cough.**

Whilst it can be often be successfully treated with antibiotics, Legionnaire's Disease can be fatal.

Possibly the biggest risk is when you have been away from the property for more than a week or so.

Control measures that you can do include:

- Run all the hot and cold taps for minimum 2 minutes
- Flush the shower head with warm water for a minimum of 1 minute after its not been used for more than a week (to do this, remove from holder before switching on the shower, then hold down over drain to lessen risk of inhaling sprayed droplets)
- Flush the toilet twice to empty the cistern and circulate fresh water through the system
- Shower spray heads present a small risk in domestic properties, and should be dismantled and cleaned of scale and debris on a regular basis, for example every 3 months
- If you have a water storage tank and you notice the lid is missing or damaged, exposing the stored water to things that could contaminate it then please contact us and report this as a repair
- Letting us know if your hot water is not heating properly

GAS

Working with gas, or working on something that could potentially release gas, affect the ventilation of a gas appliance, or ignite gas, is high risk. Only Gas Safe registered contractors and employees are allowed to work on gas fittings and equipment. The use of knowledgeable, experienced, qualified and registered professionals is key to safe work with gas across the UK. We make sure that any contractors or operatives who work with gas in our homes are Gas Safe registered.

An average of 6 people a year die from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by faulty gas equipment.

Carbon monoxide can leak from badly fitted or poorly maintained gas appliances. It is a highly poisonous gas and extremely dangerous as you cannot see it, taste it or smell it but it can kill quickly and with no warning. It can also cause serious long term health problems.

Keeping yourself safe

- Gas appliances, fixtures and fittings should be fitted, serviced and maintained by a Gas Safe registered engineer. If you are in any doubt visit www.gassaferegister.co.uk/ or ask the engineer to show you their gas safe ID card.
- Any damage or signs of corrosion, such as rusting should be checked, you should let us know if you see this.
- Our homes are required to have a 'landlord gas safety check' every 12 months. It is a requirement of your tenancy agreement that you allow us access to do this. If you do not have a copy of your landlords gas safety certificate or have any questions about your gas appliances, call us on 0800 085 7843.
- An audible carbon monoxide alarm should be fitted if there is an 'open flue' heating appliance such as a gas fire and back boiler, to warn you of a leak. Where we have installed an 'open flue' appliance, we have fitted a carbon monoxide alarm, this is tested annually.



Signs of a Carbon Monoxide leak

1. You are feeling unwell

Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea, breathlessness, collapse/loss of consciousness.

These symptoms can be similar to other illnesses so can often be overlooked but they will occur when you're at home and seem to disappear when you leave. You will also notice that others in your home (including pets) are experiencing symptoms at a similar time.

2. The flames on your gas appliance will be yellow or orange rather than blue
3. You could see dark staining on/around appliances
4. The pilot light will frequently blow out
5. An increase in condensation inside the window

What to do if you suspect Carbon Monoxide (CO) is present

- Open doors and windows, turn off gas appliances
- If you think there is an immediate danger, call the Gas Emergency Helpline on 0800 111 999
- Get your gas appliances checked
- Call Merthyr Valleys Homes on 0800 085 7843.

What to do if you suspect CO poisoning

Get fresh air immediately. Open doors and windows, turn off gas appliances and leave the property.

See your doctor immediately or go to hospital - let them know that you suspect CO poisoning. They can do a blood or breath test to check

SOLID FUEL (COAL FIRE & WOOD BURNING APPLIANCES)

Coal and wood burning appliances and flues that have not been properly installed, maintained or that are poorly ventilated can also produce carbon monoxide.

Keeping yourself safe

Appliances that are in regular use should be checked by a competent registered engineer. The most common registration for solid fuel and wood fuel engineers is through HETAS.

Where we have solid fuel heating appliances in our homes, we will complete a service it every 6 months. Contact us if you are concerned that a safety check is overdue on your solid fuel appliance.

An audible carbon monoxide alarm must be fitted if you have a solid fuel appliance. We have fitted one in every home where there is a solid fuel appliance. This is checked every 6 months and is a requirement of your tenancy agreement that you allow us access to do this

Signs of a Carbon Monoxide leak

Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea, breathlessness, collapse/loss of consciousness.

These symptoms can be similar to other illnesses so can often be over looked but they will occur when you're at home and seem to disappear when you leave. You will also notice that others in your home (including pets) are experiencing symptoms that appear at a similar time.

What to do if you suspect carbon monoxide is present

- Open doors and windows
- Allow the fire to burn itself out
- Do not stay in the room any longer than is necessary
- Do not attempt to re-kindle the appliance until it has been checked by a competent engineer
- Get your chimney swept

What to do if you suspect CO poisoning

Get fresh air immediately. Open doors and windows, turn off appliances and leave the property.

See your doctor immediately or go to hospital - let them know that you suspect CO poisoning. They can do a blood or breath test to check.