

Landlords Ready Reckoner

Common Hazards

Introduction

As a Landlord it is your responsibility to ensure that your property is free from hazards. This guide will help you understand the measures that should be taken to avoid the most common hazards.

Damp and Mould

1. The property should be free from rising and penetrating damp and condensation.
2. The property's damp proof course should be in good condition.
3. Providing clothes drying facilities will discourage tenants drying clothes on heaters, the most common cause of damp and mould.
4. Plumbing should be properly installed to prevent leaks and damp. Facilities should be properly connected to waste pipes and regularly maintained.
5. Guttering and downpipes should be correctly installed, secure and maintained to prevent build-up of debris.
6. Extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms should be fitted to help remove moisture.
7. Air bricks, trickle vents, roof and underfloor vents allow natural ventilation.
8. Frost protection will help avoid problems such as burst pipes and tanks.
9. There should be adequate thermal insulation, and appropriate means of space heating (see 'Excess Cold').

Excess Cold

1. Thermal insulation should be provided to minimise heat loss. This includes loft insulation (min 270mm), and cavity wall insulation if the property has a cavity wall.
2. A fully working heating system should be installed, in all rooms of the dwelling, including hallways. The Occupants should be able to control the heating using a timer switch or thermostatic control. It should be properly installed and maintained by a suitably qualified engineer for example Gas Safe registered. The heating system should be economical is not in a position where they are unable to afford to heat the property.
3. The property should be free from damp (see 'Damp and Mould').
4. Windows and doors should be free from draughts.
5. In multi-occupied buildings, provision for space heating may be centrally controlled. Controls must allow the occupants to regulate the temperature within their dwelling.

Gas Safety

1. Landlords have a duty to ensure a Gas Safety check is carried out for each appliance and flue, every 12 months. The check must be carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer and a copy of the certificate provided to a new tenant before they move in or to an existing tenant within 28 days of renewal.
2. A Carbon Monoxide detector should be installed to give warning to occupants if gas is building up within the dwelling. These should be appropriately sited and maintained. Please note there is a legislative requirement to provide carbon monoxide detectors where heating is provided by a solid fuel burning appliance, for example a log burner.
3. Flues should be maintained regularly and not sited close to a window that opens.
4. Gas, oil and solid fuel burning appliances must be correctly installed and maintained. Ventilation must be provided in accordance with manufacturers guidelines.
5. LPG is heavier than air, so ground level ventilation should be provided where LPG is used.

Electrical Hazards

1. Electrical safety checks should be undertaken by a competent engineer. An Electrical Inspection Report covering the whole installation should be obtained. These are usually valid for a period of 5-10 years.
2. A Residual Current Device (RCD) can provide additional safety. These can be incorporated into the consumer unit. An RCD is a device which detects deficiencies in the electrical system and switches off the supply.
3. Exposed metalwork such as gas and water pipes should be connected to the main earth terminal.
4. There should be an adequate number of appropriately sited sockets and light switches to supply power to all necessary appliances, reducing the need for extension cables. As a guide, the kitchen should have three double sockets above the worktop and two double sockets below the worktops. All bedrooms and living rooms should have at least two double sockets.
5. There should be no socket outlets in bathrooms other than 12 volt AC (e.g. shaver sockets).

Fire Safety

1. Smoke alarms must be fitted in each property. For further guidance please see check out www.nelc.gov.uk. This will give you details of the current local standards required.
2. There should be a safe means of escape in case of fire from all parts of the dwelling. There may be a need for an escape window on the first floor, particularly where stairs open into a living room rather than a hallway leading to an external exit.
3. The dwelling should be constructed of fire resistant materials. The design and construction should help contain and limit the spread of fire.
4. Sufficient and appropriately sited electric sockets will reduce the need for extension leads and overloading of sockets. The electrical installation (distribution board, wiring etc.) should meet the current regulations, and should be properly installed and regularly checked and tested. There should be no defects to sockets or switches.
5. Residual Current Devices (RCDs) help prevent fires caused by electrical deficiencies.
6. All fitted appliances and equipment which present a possible source of ignition should be correctly installed and maintained. A fixed heating system should be properly installed and regularly serviced (see 'Excess Cold'). This will discourage the use of portable heaters.
7. Cookers should not be sited on a through route and should not be near any flammable materials.

Food Safety

1. There should be space for sufficient cooking facilities away from any through route.
2. There should be sufficient appropriate power sockets above and below the worktop (see Electrical Hazards).
3. There should be adequate lighting to the kitchen, and appropriate means of ventilation.
4. There should be enough food storage facilities, which should be finished internally and externally with smooth impervious surfaces.
5. The sink and drainer, with suitable splashback, must be in good repair and easy to clean. There must be an adequate supply of hot and cold water at all times.
6. Wall surfaces should be smooth and easy to clean. Worktop surfaces should be of an adequate size and have an impervious finish. The joint between any sink, drainer or worktop and the adjacent wall should be sealed and watertight.
8. The kitchen floor should be fitted with appropriate covering, such as tiles or lino, that is easy to clean and free from cracks and other disrepair.
9. In multi-occupied premises where there are more than one family, sharing facilities, we recommend you arrange for a Pre-Let Inspection from the Home Improvement Service. This can also be arranged if you are looking to purchase a new property, with the intention of letting out as a multiple occupancy home.

Preventing Falls

1. There must be adequate natural and artificial lighting in all rooms and to staircases to minimise the risk of falls.
2. Guarding should be provided to stairs, landings and balconies. It should be at least 1,100mm high and strong enough to support the weight of people leaning against it. There should be no openings to the guarding larger than 100mm.
3. Stairs should have a minimum width of 900mm to allow the stairs to be negotiated by a child and adult side-by-side.
4. Tread lengths should be 280-360mm and riser heights should be 100-180mm. These should remain consistent throughout the flight.
5. Sturdy handrails should be sited 900-1,000mm from the stair and should be easy to grasp and extend the full length of the flight.
6. There should be reasonable space at the top and bottom of any stairs, with no projections or sharp edges. It is not acceptable to have non-safety glass doors located near the foot of a flight of stairs.
7. The headroom to stairs themselves should be a minimum of 2,000mm.
8. Floorboards should be laid to an even finish, and carpets and floor fittings throughout the property should be in good repair and properly fitted to ensure there are no trip hazards
9. All emergency escape windows must have opening limiters, set to 100mm, which can be overridden in case of emergency.
10. Where internal window sills are lower than 800mm from the floor, safety glass and/or guarding/restrictors should be provided.
11. Outdoor paths and yards should be even and incorporate adequate drainage.

Safety

1. The use of window locks, deadlocks, burglar alarms, security lights, window grilles, spy holes and chains on entrance doors can improve security for your tenant.
2. All external doors must be sturdy and fit for purpose. They must have a secure locking mechanism.
3. Tenants must have access to keys for all locks including windows and doors.
4. However, excess security measures can hamper means of escape in case of fire. (see 'Fire Safety')

Overcrowding

1. There must be an adequate number of bedrooms for the people occupying the house, depending on room sizes, sex of occupants and relationship of occupants.
2. One bedroom to be occupied by two people, and a property with two bedrooms can be occupied by up to four people. However if a boy and girl are over the age of 10, separate rooms should be provided.
3. The kitchen, living area, and bathrooms should also be of an adequate size for the household.
4. Each bath, shower and WC should be sited in a bathroom with a lockable door.
5. Where facilities are shared between more than one household, we recommend the landlord calls the Home Improvement Service for up-to-date guidance.

Hot Surfaces

1. Kitchens should be of adequate size and of such a layout so as to ensure that cookers are safely sited away from doors, through routes and other potentially hazardous areas (see 'Food Safety').
2. Where a cooker is provided, it should be in good working order and securely placed.
3. There should be adequate guarding of any open flame. The temperature of exposed surfaces of radiators, pipework, hot water tanks, taps, storage heaters, boilers and tanks should be limited to a maximum of 43°C, or be appropriately guarded.

4. The best way to address risks from scalding is to limit the temperature delivered at taps. Thermostatic mixer valves can be fitted, and it is advised that water to baths is about 45°C. Kitchen sink taps should be limited to 60°C.
5. In high risk premises such as hostels and sheltered housing the surface temperature of accessible heating appliances and pipework should be a maximum of 43°C, or guarded.

Personal Sanitation and Hygiene

1. The WC compartment or bathroom should have adequate heat, light and ventilation.
2. Where there is a separate WC, away from the bathroom, you need to ensure there is also a wash hand basin with hot and cold water.
3. Each bath, shower, WC and wash hand basin should be stable and secure, and be able to be easily cleaned. WC's should have a working flush.
4. The bathroom should be provided with a lockable door capable of giving privacy.
5. There should be supplies of hot and cold water over each sink.
6. There should be space for a washing machine with a power socket adjacent.
7. All water-using facilities must be properly connected to adequate waste pipes carrying the waste from the dwelling to a drainage system. Each waste pipe should incorporate a trap to provide a water seal to prevent draughts and foul air entering the dwelling.
8. Connections between WC's and the drain must be air-tight and adequately ventilated to avoid leakage of the foul sewage or smells. The system should be designed and constructed so as to ensure that the pipes do not block.

Domestic Hygiene, Pests and Hygiene

1. The design, construction and maintenance of the dwelling, including kitchen and bathroom, should enable it to be kept clean.
2. Walls, floors, ceilings and surfaces should be smooth and free from cracks to enable them to be easily cleaned.
3. The exterior of the property should be free from any cracks, holes or gaps larger than the diameter of a pencil in order to prevent access by pests (for example vermin), particularly around pipes and cables.
4. There should be suitable provision for the storage of refuse outside and inside the dwelling. The presence of vermin will not only affect your own tenants, it will also impact on the neighbourhood around.

Use of Amenities

1. The layout of the dwelling and in particular the kitchen and bathroom should be convenient, safe and easy to use.
2. Wash hand basins, sinks, worktops, WC's, baths and showers should be located at an appropriate height, and with sufficient free space to allow use without strain.
3. Electrical sockets should be conveniently sited.
4. Light switches should be sited near to door openings, at each end of staircases and corridors, and at a reasonable height.
5. Door handles should be at a reasonable height and window catches should be readily accessible without strain.
6. Cupboards and shelves should be sited where they can be easily reached.

Structural Collapse and Falling Elements

1. The roof structure should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to be strong enough to support the weight of the covering, be securely fixed and to cope with adverse weather conditions. Roof coverings and chimney stacks/pots should be secure and maintained in good repair.
2. Lintels should be of sufficient strength and be maintained in good repair. Frames to all doors and windows should be securely fixed and maintained.
3. All external pipework and gutters should be securely fixed and properly maintained.

4. Any external cladding, rendering or similar finishing, and any coping, should be securely fixed and in good repair.
5. All external balconies and walkways should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to be capable of supporting their own weight and the imposed loads.
6. Ceilings should be designed, constructed, fixed and maintained to be strong enough to remain intact.
7. Internal walls should be designed, constructed and maintained to be strong enough to support their own weight and any loads reasonably expected.
8. Floors and staircases should be designed, constructed and maintained to be of sufficient strength to support the weight of furniture, fixtures and fittings.
9. Fixtures and fittings should be properly and securely fixed.

Collision and Entrapment

1. Openable windows should not project over pathways.
2. Self-closers on doors should be adjusted so as not to slam.
3. Doors and windows should be maintained in good repair.
4. Safety glazing should be provided in doors and windows where necessary (see 'Preventing Falls').

Light

1. Windows should be of adequate size, shape and position to allow for reasonable daylight into rooms.
2. There should be adequate artificial lighting in all rooms throughout the property, especially rooms of limited natural lighting.
3. Windows should be wide enough to provide a reasonable view of the immediate surroundings to allow supervision of outside recreation space and the means of access to the dwelling.

Further information can be found by checking current Building Standards.

Contact the Home Improvement Service on 01472 324777 to arrange a pre-letting inspection, where we will be happy to come and visit the property you are letting and offer support and advice.