

Communal Areas

These are hallways, staircases, balconies, bin areas in and around the flats where you live. The common area is not an extension to your home and is not a communal amenity area. Common areas are no smoking spaces.

- We need your help to keep landings and stairwells free of any obstructions, trip and fire hazards. These may include: pushchairs, prams or buggies, rubbish bags, wheeled bins, lockers and cabinets, washing machines, tumble dryers and other goods awaiting disposal, unwanted bedding and mattresses, children's toys and play furniture, shopping trolleys, loose carpets, plant pots, unwanted mail and newspapers. Bicycles must not be stored in communal areas as they could hamper evacuation. Residents should find alternative storage locations.
- Fire doors to escape stairways should not be held open.
- Mobility scooters should be kept inside your home. Contact your landlord/Freeholder for advice and assistance where this might not be considered feasible. A formal risk assessment will need to be undertaken.
- Bin store doors should be kept closed – large items of household waste such as furniture should not be left in the bin store. Residents should make arrangements for them to be collected.
- Individual wheelie bins should not be left in communal areas or under staircases. Where provided, wheelie bins should be stored in areas away from the building.
- Electrical cupboards must not be used for storage.
- Storage cupboards on landings should not be used to locate and use electrical appliances. Doors to storage cupboards should be kept locked shut.



Other fire safety features in a building containing flats

Some blocks of flats in Cambridge have extra fire safety features installed.

The flats where you live might have a pipe fitted for the fire service to pump water through to fight a fire in the building. These should be kept clear of obstructions and not tampered with to ensure they work when they are needed in an emergency. If you are a tenant in one of these buildings you will be provided with information about these features which you should be aware of.

Where lifts are provided in flats they are normally not to be used in the event of fire unless they are an evacuation lift.

Red fire alarm call points are not normally located inside flats. However, there are some flats in Cambridge that have fire alarm call points in the stairways and communal areas. They can be used to sound the fire alarm in these areas only – they do not sound fire alarms in individual flats.

Some blocks of flats have opening windows/vents to release smoke from the communal areas and these should not be tampered with. They may be opened manually by the fire service, or sometimes they open upon activation of a smoke alarm. These smoke alarms do not sound or raise an alarm in the event of fire but are only there to open the window/vent.

Green boxes – some flats have electronic security locks on the main entry/exit doors. These have a 'push to exit' button which should still work when there is a fire. There might be a small green box next to this button that looks like a fire alarm break glass box. If the normal button does not work you can break the green box glass to release the door lock to exit the building.

Fire Safety in Flats

A guide to fire safety in flats for council tenants and leaseholders for all types of flats



Design of flats for fire safety

The walls, certain doors and the floors are designed to withstand fire and slow the spread of smoke. We need your help to maintain fire safety in and around your block of flats.

All our blocks of flats are checked on a regular basis and fire precaution work is carried out where required.



Plan Ahead

- Fit smoke alarms on each level in your home.
- Make sure they work by testing your smoke alarm on a regular basis, ideally monthly, by pushing the test button.
- Make a fire action plan so everyone in your home knows how to escape. Make everyone familiar with the way out of the building.
- Make sure everyone can easily find door and window keys.
- Think about a room you can go to where you can be seen from outside.
- Get into the habit of closing all doors at night.
- Keep exits from your home clear.
- Do not block access roads to your building.

Plan ahead for a fire now. Think how you and everyone in your flat will escape.

Further guidance can be found at:

www.cambsfire.gov.uk/firesafety | www.gov.uk/firekills

Fire prevention in the flats where you live

The most common causes of fires are:



Kitchen fires

Take extra care when cooking and avoid the use of deep fat fryers. Distraction is also a common cause of kitchen fires.



Appliances

Switch off appliances at night and buy appliances from trustworthy sources. It is recommended that you register your appliances at www.registermyappliance.org.uk. If possible don't leave appliances on when you go out.



Heating

Use only the fixed heating system in your home. Be careful how you use portable heaters – use only a convector heater in your hallway. Do not use gas, paraffin, or electric bar heaters.



Electrical sockets*

Don't use adapters to overload sockets. Have no more than one plug in each socket. The Council will periodically inspect fixed electrical wiring to ensure it is safe.



Cigarettes and candles

Stub out cigarettes and dispose of them properly. Keep smoking materials hidden and out of reach of children.

Make sure candles are in a fireproof holder and don't light them near children, pets, curtains or other fabric. All candles should be extinguished when leaving the property and when going to bed.



Rubbish

Put all rubbish in the bins provided and ensure any bin-room doors are closed behind you.



Gas appliances*

If you have a gas boiler, ensure the Council is given access to service and maintain it annually.



Deliberate fires

Arson is a cause of fires. Where possible keep where you live secure and keep communal areas clear of combustible items.

* Leaseholders are responsible for gas and electrical safety regulatory compliance within their property.

What to do if there is a fire in your flat

- **Alert everyone** in the flat and leave, closing doors and windows behind you.
- **Feel doors with the back of your hand.** Do not open doors if they feel warm.
- **Do not look for the fire** or try to put it out.
- It is important that you **close your main flat entrance door** on your way out.
- If it is safe to do so, **make your neighbours aware of the fire.**
- **Don't use the lifts** – only use the stairs.
- When you are out of the building and can find a phone, **call 999** (or 112 from a mobile phone) – don't assume someone else has done it.
- **Do not re-enter the building.**
- **Call the fire service even if it is a small fire.**

If fire breaks out in another flat or communal area

- If there's a fire elsewhere in the building, you are usually safe in your own flat with the doors and windows closed. This is a stay put policy.
- However, it is your choice if you wish to leave or you are affected by heat or smoke.
- Only do this if it is safe to do so – if you cannot get out safely, stay in your flat.
- Stay by the window where you can be seen. Place damp towels or bedding around any door frames to prevent smoke entering the room.
- Alert the fire service by phoning 999 and tell them where you live, your flat number, the floor level and whether or not you are still in the building.
- If you discover a fire in a communal area you should leave the building. Once safely outside call the fire service. A few flats in Cambridge have red fire alarm call points in the communal areas – break the glass on your way out of the building – you will still need to call the fire service once outside.