

Yorkhill Housing Association

Fire Safety in Housing Stock and Common Areas Policy

1. Introduction

This policy outlines fire prevention measures that Yorkhill Housing Association uses to ensure properties are protected from fire. In developing this policy document the Association has relied substantially on information from, and reference to, the Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH) 'Landlords Facilities Safety Control Manual – Landlord Guide to Fire Safety in Housing Stock and Common Areas'. Processes have been bespoke to accommodate the Association's housing stock type, working practices and testing and servicing regimes.

2. Landlord Duties

Yorkhill Housing Association has certain fire safety obligations to ensure tenants, visitors and fire fighters are safe. Yorkhill Housing Association must ensure that premises, equipment and devices are maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order, in good repair and are subject to a suitable system of maintenance.

3. Fire and Smoke Alarms

The installation of smoke and fire detectors is intended to reduce the risk of fire and the consequent loss of life, injury and damage to property.

The presence of a suitable, properly installed and maintained automatic fire detection and warning system will alert occupiers to the presence of a fire in its early stages and enable them to evacuate to a place of safety before the escape routes become blocked by smoke or directly affected by fire. The fire detection system should be able to wake residents who are sleeping and alert of fires in all areas including hidden areas such as boiler rooms and cellars.

The revised Domestic Technical Handbook guidance states there should be at least:

- one functioning smoke alarm in the room which is frequently used by the occupants for general daytime living purposes;
- one functioning smoke alarm in every circulation space, such as hallways and landings; and
- one heat alarm in every kitchen.

All alarms should be interlinked.

Yorkhill Housing Association has installed or is in the process of installing, in all of its properties, interlinked smoke and fire alarms that meet the standard set by building regulations.

Alarms are installed to current standards and the Association ensures alarms are maintained in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.

Yorkhill Housing Association ensures alarms are in working order at the start of each new tenancy. Tenants are advised to test alarms on a weekly basis and advise the Association immediately of any issues.

4. Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Carbon monoxide alarms are installed in any room containing gas boilers/appliances. The alarms are checked and tested by the Association's commissioned contractor during annual gas servicing. Tenants are advised to test the alarms on a weekly basis and advise the Association immediately of any issues.

5. Communal Closes

Escape route(s) must be free from clutter to ensure people are able to evacuate in the event of an emergency.

Information will be provided to residents for the need for good housekeeping (such as keeping escape routes clear of combustible materials).

For tenants, instructions will form part of a tenancy agreement. Information will also be provided in the tenant's handbook once produced.

Communal Closes with Alarms

The Association has alarms fitted in the communal areas of properties at 1265 Argyle Street, 58 and 60 Lymburn Street and 46 Overnewton Street. Tenants are aware of what action should be taken if the alarm sounds. The Alarms are tested every two weeks by Yorkhill Housing Association staff.

The Association will check all communal areas, escape routes and stairways during regular estate management inspections.

6. Front Doors

Tenants should not change front doors without asking for the landlord's permission first, as it can affect the fire safety of the building and the communal escape routes.

7. Keeping Tenants and Visitors Informed

The Association is currently developing a tenant's handbook which will include full information in relation to fire safety in housing stock and common areas.

8. Certification

Before a tenancy commences, Yorkhill Housing Association will:

- carry out an inspection to ensure there are no fire hazards;
- provide a new tenant with a copy of a gas safety certificate;
- provide a new tenant with a copy of an electrical safety certificate;
- provide a new tenant with a copy of a valid energy performance certificate;
- provide a copy of the evacuation procedure for properties at 1265 Argyle Street and 58/60 Lyburn Street. All other properties should follow the guidance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

9. Tenant Responsibilities

Tenants also have several responsibilities with regards to fire safety. Tenants are responsible for:

- ensuring smoke alarms are in constant working order;
- carrying out weekly tests of the smoke alarm;
- informing landlords immediately if the smoke alarm is not in constant working order;
- ensuring communal areas are not obstructed;
- ensuring fire doors are not obstructed or propped open;
- ensuring prams, bicycles, mobility scooters or any waste material are not stored in communal areas as this can fuel a fire, causing it to spread at a faster rate;
- ensuring no flammable materials are stored in cupboards with electrical circuits;
- disposing of rubbish in the bins provided.

Yorkhill Housing Association will make tenants aware of these responsibilities in tenancy handbooks, tenancy start-up packs and newsletters/information leaflets.

10. Disabled Persons/Vulnerable Persons

If a tenant has a disability, impairment or special need; with an occupational therapist referral, special devices can be installed thought adaptations funding for, for example:

- smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or flashing light for those with a hearing impairment;
- plugs which are designed to be easily removed;
- smoke alarms with a strobe light outside the house to catch the attention of neighbours or passers by;
- emergency call or alarm systems for summoning help.

If a tenant advises Yorkhill Housing Association that a member of their household requires help to evacuate, they should be advised to have a Personal Emergency and Evacuation Plan which should consider and plan for any additional needs to evacuate safely. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Services may be able to assist residents with an Escape Plan.

The Association's Tenancy Services Assistant will regularly check that the Fire Brigade Box at 46 Overnewton Street that holds tenants details is kept up to date.

11. Emergency Lighting (Overnewton Court only)

Yorkhill Housing Association has emergency lighting installed in its retirement housing complex only at 46 Overnewton Street (Overnewton Court).

It is crucial that people can easily escape from a building to a place of safety. The Escape route(s) must be free from clutter and have sufficient light to ensure people are able to evacuate in the event of an emergency.

If a fire occurs, tenants are likely to be panicked, distressed and disorientated, especially at night. Dedicated escape lighting is not necessary within dwellings as it is assumed the occupants will have a degree of familiarity with the layout. However the common escape routes should be illuminated to assist occupants when making their way to a place of safety. Escape routes must be adequately lit, even if the mains power supply has failed. An emergency lighting system is designed to automatically illuminate upon the failure of the power supply to the conventional artificial lighting.

Overnewton Court emergency lighting system is tested on a monthly basis with a record of the test maintained for at least 3 years. A discharge test is also

carried out annually by a competent person. This entails simulating a power failure and conducting a test for the full rated duration of the emergency lights (that is, 3 hours). The emergency lights should still be working at the end of the test. If failures are detected, these will be rectified as soon as possible. The results are recorded and retained for at least 3 years.

12. Fire Doors and Compartmentation (Overnewton Court)

A properly fitted and maintained fire door can help to suppress a fire and restrict its initial development by limiting the amount of oxygen available to it. It will also create a sealed barrier against smoke and flames.

Escape routes are identified. The Building is split into fire-resisting compartments by fire-resisting doors, walls and floors which will provide a physical barrier to fire. This reduces the speed in which flames and smoke can spread through the building, ultimately buying the tenants' time to escape safely. When fire doors are closed, they will endure direct attack by fire for a specified period of time, usually ranging from 30 minutes to 60 minutes.

13. Intumescent strips (Overnewton Court)

Intumescent strips are present on all fire doors. Intumescent strips are fitted into grooves cut into the door or the frame, or alternatively, can be surface mounted. As soon as the temperature in the vicinity of the strips exceeds 200°C, usually about 10-15 minutes after the start of a fire, the seal swells and seals the gaps between door and frame.

14. Emergency Exit Doors (Overnewton Court)

Doors which are to be used as an exit in the case of an emergency are able to be opened from the inside without the use of a key.

15. Fire Equipment (Overnewton Court)

Fire extinguishers are regularly tested and certificated.

16. Fire Evacuation Plan (Overnewton Court)

Overnewton Court has its own fire evacuation procedure (Appendix 2).

17. Smoke Control of Communal Areas (1265 Argyle Street and 58 and 60 Lymburn Street)

There should be some means of ventilating the common corridors/lobbies to control smoke and protect the common stairs. This can be achieved by either natural means or by means of mechanical ventilation.

1265 Argyle Street and 58 and 60 Lymburn Street only have mechanical controls for smoke ventilation. These are tested every two weeks by Yorkhill Housing Association staff and the outcome of the tests are recorded. Any remedial action required is taken timeously.

18. Commercial Premises

The Association owns and rents out one commercial property. As landlord the Association maintains the fire alarm and smoke detectors within the premises and undertakes an annual service of the installation.

19. Fire Rescue Service

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) offers free home fire safety visits (HFSVs) comprising an assessment of fire risk within the home at that time and the provision of advice on preventing fires, avoiding fire spread and formulating an escape plan in event of fire. Yorkhill Housing Association staff should advise tenants of the availability of this service.

Appendix 1

Routine testing

Smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors.

All grades of system need to be tested periodically to ensure that there has not been any major failure. This does not require any specialist knowledge, and can normally be carried out, quite easily, by the occupier of the premises, who will, however, need simple instructions in how to do so.

The Association will test smoke and heat and carbon monoxide alarms during annual gas servicing. Tenants are advised to test smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms on a weekly basis.

Appendix 2

Overnewton Court

Fire Evacuation Procedure

Fire Safety

On hearing the fire alarm

If you are in your home, and the fire is not in your home, stay inside and make sure the flat door is closed.

- **Wait to be evacuated or until you are informed by the fire officer that all is safe;**
- **Remember the lift will be out of operation.**

If you are in a common area; laundry, lounge, stairway or corridor:

- **Leave by the nearest exit and assemble in Arthur Street;**
- **Do not hinder the access or work of the fire brigade;**
- **Do not attempt to return to your flat until told to do so by the fire officer or responsible person.**

Appendix 3

Definitions

Common Area – ‘A common area is a portion of a property that is shared and used by multiple residents. This would include areas like the lobby, stairway and hallway.’

Compartmentation – ‘subdivision of a building by fire-resisting walls and/or floors for the purpose of limiting fire spread within the building.’

Competent Person – ‘person, suitably trained and qualified by knowledge and practical experience, and provided with the necessary instructions, to enable the required task(s) to be carried out correctly.’

Dry Riser – ‘used in buildings 18m to 59m tall to supply water for fire-fighting purposes via vertical pipes which are otherwise kept empty and dry.’

Dwelling – ‘a house, flat, or other place of residence.’

Emergency Lighting – ‘lighting provided for use when the supply to normal lighting fails.’

Fire Door – ‘door or shutter provided for the passage of people, air or objects which, together with its frame and furniture as installed in a building, is intended (when closed) to resist the passage of fire and/or gaseous products of combustion, and is capable of meeting specified performance criteria to those ends.’

Smoke Alarm – ‘device containing, within one housing, all the components, necessary for detecting smoke and for giving an audible alarm.’

Appendix 4

Legislation

- BS 5839-6:2019+A1:2020
- Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004
- Domestic Technical Handbook (as revised)
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994
- Fire (Scotland) Act 2005
- Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974