



Knowes Housing Association

Fire Safety

A Guide for Tenants

Safety in the Kitchen

Most fires within the home start in the kitchen. Scalding and burns can cause severe and life-changing injuries. Children and vulnerable adults are at particular risk.

Cooking

- When cooking, take care if you are wearing loose clothing or have long hair, as this can easily catch fire.
- Keep electrical leads, tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and the hob.
- Never leave children alone in the kitchen.
- Keep matches, lighters and saucepan handles where children cannot reach them, and fit a safety catch over the oven door.
- Angle saucepan handles so they do not stick out from the hob, or over naked flames.
- Do not leave pans on the hob unattended. Take them off the heat if you must leave the kitchen.
- Keep the oven, hob, toaster and grill clean as a build-up of fat, crumbs or grease can easily catch fire.
- Do not use matches or lighters to light gas cookers. Spark devices, which can be purchased from hardware stores are much safer.
- Do not put anything that is made of metal or is metallic inside the microwave.
- When you have finished cooking, ensure you turn off the oven and hob.
- Do not cook if you have consumed alcohol or taken medication/drugs that may make you tired or drowsy.
- Never use barbeques inside as they are a fire hazard and produce lethal levels of carbon monoxide.

Deep-frying

- If you regularly deep-fry food, opt for an electric deep-fat fryer. These have built in thermostats to prevent overheating, and are much safer to use.
- Dry food before putting it into hot oil to prevent the oil from splashing.

- If you are using an ordinary pan, never fill it more than 1/3rd full of oil.
- If the oil starts to smoke, then it is too hot. Turn the heat off and leave it to cool.

What to do if a pan catches fire

- Do not take unnecessary risks – make sure you get everyone out the house and call the Fire and Rescue Service on 999.
- Do not move the pan and never throw water over it.
- If it is safe, turn off the heat under the pan, cover with a metal lid, fire blanket or tea towel and allow it to cool completely.

Treating minor burns

- If a burn is bigger than the size of a postage stamp, you should seek medical advice from your doctor, visit A&E or call an ambulance if appropriate.
- Run cold water over it for at least 10 minutes and then cover it with a clean, non-fluffy material such as cling-film.
- This will help prevent infection until you have received medical assistance.
- If the burn is smaller than the size of a postage stamp, you should run cold water over it for at least 10 minutes and then cover it with cling-film.

Using Electrics and Appliances

Plugs and cables

- Unplug any electrical appliances when they are not in use.
- Do not overload sockets.
- Use one plug in each socket.
- If you must use an adaptor, use a “bar-type” one with a fuse and keep the total output of all plugs in the adaptor to no more than 13 amps. For reference, a kettle alone uses 13 amps.
- Higher powered appliances, such as washing machines, always require a socket to themselves.

- Never put cables under carpets or mats where damage could go un-noticed.
- Make sure that the plug has the correct fuse for the appliance.
- Check for signs of loose or frayed wiring and faulty plugs or sockets – faults may look like scorch marks or flickering lights – and have any faults you may find fixed before using them.
- The inner coloured sheath wiring, which is typically blue, red and green or yellow, should never be immediately visible.
- Worn or taped-up cables and leads should be replaced or repaired by a competent engineer.
- Never use electrical appliances in bathrooms or wet areas unless specifically designed for use in wet environments.

Electric Blankets

- Do not fold electric blankets.
- Protect the wiring by storing them flat or rolled up.
- Do not leave them switched on all night, unless they are thermostatically controlled.
- Check the manufacturer's instructions for suitability to wash your blanket.
- Never use with a hot water bottle, when damp, touch with wet hands or use when still folded, tucked or creased.
- Inspect regularly and replace if in doubt.
- If over 10 years old, you should consider replacing it, and if used regularly it may be best to replace this after as little as three years.
- Do not use on air flow pressure relief beds.
- Electric blankets should carry the British Standard Kitemark and the British Electro-technical Approvals Board (BEAB) symbol on them.



Appliances and chargers



- Ensure you use genuine appliances and chargers.
- Look for a CE mark, but be aware that this could be faked.
- Do not leave devices charging overnight.
- When charging, place devices on heatproof surfaces.

Portable heaters

- Always position the heaters to ensure the back is against the wall, and the front is facing the room.
- If possible, secure them to the wall to prevent them from falling over.
- Do not place them near curtains or furnishings and never use them for drying clothes.
- Never cover air vents on the fan or convector heaters.
- Switch them off if you are not in the room, and when you go to bed.
- The use of heater fired by paraffin or liquid petroleum is not permitted.
- The storage of paraffin, liquid petroleum gas or any other inflammable substance or material is prohibited in your home, outbuildings and garden.

Lights

- Do not place light bulbs near curtains and other fabrics.
- Ensure light bulbs do not exceed the maximum wattage for both the light fitting and the lampshade.

What to do if there is an electrical fire?

- You should pull out the plug or switch off the power at the fuse box.
- If you can, smother the appliance with a fire blanket or use a CO2 fire extinguisher.
- Never use water or water extinguishers.
- If you are in doubt, get out and call the Fire & Rescue Service on 999.

Gas appliances – connected to fixed supply pipework

- Around 30 people die annually in Britain from Carbon Monoxide poisoning, caused by gas appliances and flues which have not been properly installed or maintained.
- You cannot see, taste or even smell Carbon Monoxide, but it can have fatal effects without any warning.
- Never fit gas appliances without our permission.

Smoking

- More people die in fires caused by smoking than in fires from any other single cause.
- Tobacco is designed to stay lit, which is why cigarettes can so easily start an accidental fire.
- You should take care when you are tired, taking medication or have been drinking alcohol as it is very easy to fall asleep without realising that your cigarette is still burning.
- If you are going to lie down, do not light up, you could easily doze off and set your bed or sofa on fire.
- Do not leave lit cigarettes, cigars or pipes unattended.
- Keep cigarettes, matches and lighters where children cannot reach them.
- Tap your ash into an ashtray, never into a waste bin. Do not leave any ash or cigarette butts build up in the ashtray.
- We recommend that tenants smoke outside of their homes and dispose of butts safely.
- Never smoke in the communal areas of blocks and schemes.

What are your responsibilities as a Knowes Housing Tenant?

- Keep all escape routes within your home cleared.
- Keep areas below escape windows clear.
- Do not wedge fire doors open or remove door closers where fitted.
- Do not replace thumb-turn locks with keyed locks.
- Do not remove or interfere with fire safety equipment which is fitted to save the lives of you, your family, visitors and neighbours.
- Do not cover, remove or disconnect smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Do not use portable gas heaters or paraffin heaters.
- Do not store or dump items in the communal areas of blocks of houses.
- Do not fit mats or place furniture outside your house.
- Contact us if any equipment is faulty.

- Take care when cooking and decorating to avoid unwanted fire alarm activations.
- Advise us if you are unable to self-evacuate from your home.
- Do not use lifts to evacuate.
- Keep your home clean and tidy for example, keep your cooker clean and free from excess grease and oil.
- Do not hoard as this may restrict your escape, prevent access by the Fire and Rescue Service and increase the likelihood and severity of fires.
- Always allow Knowes Housing Association's approved contractors access to carry out your annual Boilet service, annual testing of your smoke and heat detectors, and five year electrical safety checks.

Your tenancy may be at risk if you fail to co-operate with us. You may also be risking your own life and the lives of others.

Bedtime Safety Routine

You are almost three times more likely to be killed in a fire that starts during the night.

- Switch off and unplug all appliances.
- Only leave on those appliances that are designed to be left on for example, fridge/freezers, clock radios and DVD players/TV.
- Check that the oven, grill and hob are off.
- Do not leave the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher running overnight.
- Turn off electric heaters.
- Check that candles are completely out. Never leave one burning when you go to sleep.
- Ensure any cigarettes, cigars and pipes have been put out properly and never smoke in bed.
- Close all doors. This can keep your escape route free from fire.
- Turn off your electric blanket unless it has been designed to be safe to be left on overnight.
- Check that your escape route is clear of obstacles and make sure both door and window keys are in the correct place.

Top tips to protect your home

- Never remove, cover or disconnect smoke and heat alarms.
- Keep alarms clean and dust free by regularly Hoovering or gently brushing the detector aperture.
- Make a fire action plan and ensure that everyone in your home knows how to escape if there is a fire.
- Keep the exits from your home clear so that people can escape if there is a fire.
- Make sure everyone in your home can easily find the keys for doors and windows.
- Take extra care in the kitchen and never leave young children alone in the kitchen.
- Take extra care when cooking with hot oil. Use a deep-fat fryer which is controlled by a thermostat.
- Never lit candles in rooms that nobody is in or in rooms where children are on their own.
- Make sure candles are in secure holders, on a surface that does not burn and are away from any materials that could burn.
- Make sure cigarettes are stubbed out properly and are disposed of carefully and never smoke in bed.
- Close doors at night – if you want to keep a child's bedroom door open, close the doors the living room and kitchen. This could save their life if there is a fire.
- Do not overload electrical sockets, remember, one plug for one socket.
- Keep matches and lighters where children cannot see or reach them.
- Avoid cooking when you're tired, been drinking or having taken medication that makes you drowsy.
- Keep areas below escape windows clear.
- Remember the risk is higher at certain times of the year, such as Christmas and Halloween.

Top tips to remember in the event of a fire

- Remain calm and act quickly.

- If you're in the room which is on fire, leave and close the door behind you.
- Raise the alarm and alert everyone in your home. Ensure children, heavy sleepers and those with hearing difficulties have been alerted.
- Get out, call the fire service and stay out.
- Only re-enter the building when advised by the Fire Service that it is safe to do so.
- If your clothes are on fire, stop, lie down and roll until the fire is out. Stop, Drop and Roll (SDR). If someone else's clothes are on fire, smother the fire with a coat or blanket.
- If cut off by the fire: block the bottom of doors with blankets and coats where possible, stay low and get to a window, phone the fire service if you have a phone available, if not, open the window and call for help and ask that someone else calls 999. If you cannot open the window, break it and cover the broken edges with a coat or a blanket.
- If there is a fire escape window, use it where it is safe to do so. Only use escape windows above ground level when it is necessary and avoid jumping. Lower yourself down before dropping to the ground.
- If it is impractical to escape, then keep your head in the fresh air until help arrives.

What you should do if there is a fire in your home

- Alert everyone in your house.
- Do not stop for valuables or to investigate the fire.
- Before opening doors, check them with the back of your hand as if they're warm, the fire is on the other side and you should not open the door.
- Alert neighbouring flats by banging on the doors on your way out and set off the main fire alarm where fitted.
- Never use lifts/elevators.
- If there is lots of smoke, crawl along the floor where the air will be the cleanest.
- Close doors after you leave.

- Once you are safely outside, use a mobile phone or a phone box to call 999.
- Give the emergency operator your name and address, including the number of your flat if necessary. Tell them what floor/floors the fire is on.
- If the fire is blocking your exit, or if the stairs in your block of flats are blocked by fire or smoke, stay calm, go inside, and wait for the fire and rescue service to arrive.

What to do if your escape route is blocked

- Get everyone into the safe room you have chosen.
- Put cushions, bedding and so on at the bottom of the door to stop smoke getting in.
- Dial 999, giving your address and the number of your flat if necessary.
- Open the window and if you feel in danger, wave a sheet out of the window so the fire fighters know where you are.

What to do if the fire is outside your home

- Seal the front door with tape if you can, as well as cushions and bedding, to stop smoke getting in.
- Close any ventilators.
- Phone 999 providing details of your name and address.
- Provide as much details as possible, as the more information fire fighters have, the quicker they can get to you and do their job.