



Fire Safety on Sydenham Hill Estate – Information for Residents

Since the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, we have been asked a number of questions by residents. We think it would be useful for everyone on the estate to see these questions, and our answers.

Get in touch with us

If you have any further questions, please contact the Estate Office. Staff there will be happy to come to your home and show you your fire escape route, if you have any doubts about how to evacuate the building if your home is affected by a fire.

If you have more general concerns or questions about fire safety, then please email these to housingfiresafety@cityoflondon.gov.uk.

You will receive an acknowledgement within two working days. An officer will be allocated to look into your concerns and you will receive a full response as early as possible, but definitely within ten working days.

Q How often does the City of London Corporation ('City Corporation') carry out fire checks on its residential blocks?

A Previously, our policy has been to commission independent fire risk assessments every three years, and to have these reviewed annually, by trained staff. However, we have now decided to have new fire risk assessments done by independent specialists every year. Frankham Risk Management Services have been commissioned to carry out new risk assessments on all our blocks. This work has started.

All Estate Managers and Estate Officers are trained in fire risk management and carry out monthly and weekly checks to address any hazards that emerge during the year. All our cleaners have been trained to identify potential fire risk and are expected to report anything they see as part of their day to day duties.

Q Can I see the most recent Fire Risk Assessment for my block?

A Yes. Links to fire risk assessments for each of the City's residential blocks can be found on the City Corporation's website, on the page for the estate. If you do not have internet access, please ask your estate team to print a copy for you.

Q How can I keep up to date with information about fire safety on the estate?

A A new page has been set up on the City Corporation's website and can be found at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/housingfiresafety. All information will be posted there and updated regularly. There will also be links to other useful information.

Anyone who does not have internet access can ask the estate staff to print off any updates for them.

As projects to improve the fire measures of buildings are progressed, updates on these will be included in the six-monthly Major Projects Update. If there are developments that all residents must be made aware of, we will write to all households. But, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Q What should we do if a fire breaks out in our building? The current advice is confusing and we don't know whether we should evacuate or stay put.

A The advice given by the London Fire Brigade is that people are usually safer staying in their home BUT that they should leave if fire or smoke is affecting their property and it is safe for them to do so. This is the advice we give in all our literature.

If you do have to evacuate, there are standard notices in our blocks telling you what to do. We understand that this has confused some people and will look at the wording of those notices to try and make it clearer.

The advice we, and the Fire Service give **if there is a fire in your property** is:

- alert everyone in your property
- leave, shutting all doors, without locking them
- if possible, alert neighbouring properties
- leave the building
- call 999 and wait for the fire service to attend. If safe to do so, wait by the entrance of the building to meet the fire service and to prevent anyone else entering the building.

Q Does everyone know how to get out of the building if they need to?

A Fire escape routes are clearly signposted and emergency lighting is regularly checked. We do advise all households to make themselves familiar with fire escape routes. If you are unsure of yours, then please contact your estate office and someone will visit you to show you.

Q Is the City Corporation proposing to introduce fire drills for residents across its estates?

A The fire service does not recommend carrying out fire drills on estates as this is extremely difficult to manage. Instead, we are offering to make a home visit to any household requesting it and to show residents their escape route.

Q What do you do to identify and help elderly and vulnerable people in an emergency?

A All Mais House residents are, of course, very well known to us and their details are made available to the emergency services. We are proactive in trying to identify all other residents who may need help in an emergency situation. We also work very closely with social services colleagues from the London Borough of Lewisham, to share information and to make sure people are supported. Our Tenancy Support Team is currently speaking to all vulnerable residents about fire safety, and our estate staff are available to offer advice and reassurance to anyone wanting it.

However, it is difficult for us to know all the people who live on our estates, especially in leasehold and privately let properties. If you have anyone in your household who might need extra help in an emergency, then please let us know straight away so that we can update our records and let the emergency services know. This is vital.

Q Does the fire service have access to information about vulnerable people?

A Yes. Every estate has a fire box, accessible only to the emergency services, and this contains information on flats where there may be people needing greater support. This is updated whenever we are made aware of a change, by the resident, their family, Adult Social Care Team, the Police or any other agency.

Q I've noticed that some of my neighbours have lots of things outside their front door and these could be flammable or trip people up if they were running from a fire. What are you doing about this?

A We have a clear protocol, agreed with the fire service, about things that can be placed outside flats. The area outside a flat is not private – it is communal space, and it is essential that items left there are restricted, so they do not cause hazards in an emergency situation.

We have always worked with residents to address these issues when they arise, but we will now be taking a much firmer approach to any areas identified as breaching the guidance.

We would also ask that residents do not leave combustible materials such as cardboard and paper outside their flats. Rubbish should be left outside doors only on the day of collection. If you see anything outside a flat that should not be there, please report this to the estate office, in confidence.

Q Should residents keep fire extinguishers in their kitchens?

A We do not advise this as different types of extinguishers are needed for different fires. Fire blankets are also not recommended. We do advise that heat detectors be fitted in kitchens and smoke detectors in halls. The London Fire Brigade offer free home safety visits which we encourage residents to take up. You can contact them directly: <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/FireSafetyRegulationTeams.asp>

Q Do we have any cladding on the estate like that on Grenfell Tower?

A No. There is nothing of that nature on the estate.

Q How fire resistant are our front doors and is the City Corporation going to replace them?

A We are carrying out a feasibility study to survey all doors and plan a programme to replace all those which have resistance of under 30 minutes. Priority will be given to doors in tower blocks and we will inform residents as soon as we know the extent of the programme and when it will start.

Q Do you plan to install sprinkler systems?

A This is something we are investigating. We need to find out exactly what is possible for each building, and what the cost would be. We are getting this information and expect to be able to come back to residents in September.

Q What about fire detection and smoke ventilation in communal areas?

A We already have an alarm system in place at Mais House. We are investigating options for other blocks of flats, as we need to make sure that anything installed is tamper-proof and does not result in false call-outs for the fire service. We will report back to residents in September.

Q Shouldn't every home have a smoke alarm?

A Yes. All City Coproation tenants' homes are currently part of a programme of electrical testing and rewiring. As part of that programme, hard-wired fire detectors are being installed.

The London Fire Brigade advises that people who live in high rise properties should have a working smoke alarm. They can help with this – more information can be found at <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/SafetyAtHome.asp> or by calling **0800 028 4428**.

Q Will leaseholders be expected to pay for the improvements and changes made as a result of improved fire safety recommendations?

A We have a duty to charge leaseholders for any work for which they are liable. We will know more about charges for the fire safety works when we have completed our feasibility studies and will update residents. We do not expect to be making changes that will affect freeholders.

Q What measures does the City Corporation take to ensure gas safety?

We have a fully comprehensive gas servicing contract and carry out annual inspections to all tenanted properties. We currently achieve 99 per cent access. In addition, we offer the same service to leaseholders at the same cost (cheaper than British Gas equivalent).

The questions and answers will be placed on the City Corporation's website at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/housingfiresafety and will be updated as more information becomes available.

If you have any questions about fire safety, then please email these to housingfiresafety@cityoflondon.gov.uk.