

# Safety and Security in Your Home

Each year more people are killed or injured by accidents in the home than any other type of accident. We hope that this leaflet will give you some useful information and advice to stay safe and secure in your home.

## Electrical safety

**Make sure you always follow these simple rules when using electricity in your home:**

- Never use plugs or switches with wet hands – water and electricity are dangerous together.
- If there is a water leak in your home do not touch any electrical fittings – turn off electricity at the meter.
- Always switch off and unplug appliances not in use, particularly before going to bed.
- Only use good quality plugs made to the correct safety standard (BS1363).
- Make sure plugs are wired correctly and always fitted with the right fuse for the appliance you are using. If in doubt consult a qualified electrician.
- Do not overload sockets – to be safe use one plug to one socket.
- Check the condition of electrical flexes regularly. Never run flexes under carpets or rugs as this could start a fire.
- Make sure you know where the main switch and fuse box are located.
- Always contact us on **01395 517458** if you feel that there is any problem with the electrical safety of your home.



## Gas Safety

- Never use a gas appliance that you think may be dangerous (signs can include stains around the gas fire or boiler pilot light, or a yellow flame).
- Remember, gas appliances need fresh air to work properly. Sometimes air is provided by ventilators in doors, walls and windows. Always ensure that all ventilators are free and clear, and not blocked or obstructed.
- Never sleep in a room containing an open flued back boiler.
- Never dry clothes over free standing gas heaters.
- Gas appliances need regular servicing if they are to work safely and efficiently.

## Gas Servicing

As a landlord, East Devon District Council, has a statutory duty to undertake an annual safety inspection of the Council's gas appliances, flues and associated pipework that we are responsible for. This includes gas central heating and fixed gas fires (see below) but not gas ovens. We will give you reasonable notice of when our contractors will carry out this work. Please advise the gas servicing contractor if this time is not convenient to you so that they can arrange for an alternative visit. If you fail to give them access to the property you are in breach of your tenancy conditions.

If you have had gas central heating or gas fires fitted at your own expense the work must have been carried out by a CORGI registered installer and a gas installation certificate and safety certificate must be forwarded to the Council. We will take over the responsibility for maintaining these after any guarantee has run out.

## Gas Leaks

### **If you suspect a gas leak:**

- turn off your gas supply at the meter,
- do not smoke or use matches or a lighter,
- do not use electrical switches (doorbells or light switches),
- open doors and windows to let the gas out, and
- call the gas emergency services – ring **Transco** on **0800 111 999**.  
Do the same if you smell gas in the street.

## Solid Fuel Safety

- Do not draw a fire with a newspaper or use petrol, paraffin or any oil to start it.
- Sweep your chimney or flue at least once a year – if your fire is not burning as well as usual it may be a sign that your chimney needs sweeping.
- If you have an enclosed room heater or boiler, follow the manufacturer's instructions and brush the smoke outlet every month.
- Burn only the recommended fuels.
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation, and do not block or obstruct fresh air ventilators.
- Draught proofing helps cut fuel bills but do not seal off the air supply to the room in which the fire is located. Fumes may build up and cause you to become ill.
- If you are concerned that the equipment is not working properly please let us know.
- When using a solid fuel or room heater for the first time each year check that the chimney has been swept and that the chimney flue has not become obstructed.



## Fire Safety

- Test your smoke detector(s) regularly.
- Know the quickest way out of your home and consider alternative routes out in the event of your main exit being blocked.
- Keep matches away from children.
- Don't leave lit candles unattended.
- Don't use or store any explosive or flammable substances on the premises.
- Don't use any portable paraffin, oil, gas cylinder, calor gas heaters or cookers.
- Use fire guards around any open fires (see below).
- Don't leave chip pans unattended.
- Don't smoke in bed.

- Make sure all cigarettes and ash are fully extinguished and that ashtray contents are cold before emptying.
- Don't dry clothes over any type of heater.
- Don't remove any fire doors or door closers in your home.
- Don't store motorcycles in sheds.

**If you live in flats with communal areas:**

- don't put anything in the communal areas – it may be flammable and may restrict escape routes in the case of fire,
- don't leave rubbish bags in communal landings or corridors, and
- report any self-closing doors that are not operating properly.

**Fire guards** – the law requires you to use a fireguard to protect children under 12 in a room with an open fire, radiant fire or other dangerous heating appliance. You should use a 'nursery' fireguard made to British Standards. Never rest clothes or other items on the guard.

**If your home catches fire:**

- Close the door of the room where the fire started. This will contain the fire and restrict the spread of poisonous fumes.
- Make sure everyone leaves the building.
- Call the Fire Brigade by dialling 999 – give your exact address.



# Accidents in the home

## Falls

60% of deaths from accidents in the home are the result of falls.

- Do not polish under carpets or rugs.
- Make sure stairs and landings are well lit and kept clear.
- If you have small children use stairguards and guards on upper floor windows.
- Wipe up any spilt liquids immediately.
- Repair or cover any holes in your floor covering (eg carpet, lino or vinylay to avoid tripping.
- Make sure your stair carpets are securely fixed.

## Poisoning

The second major cause of death in the home is poisoning. To avoid this:

- keep all medicines in a locked cabinet,
- keep all household or garden chemicals out of reach of children,
- do not store household or garden chemicals in any container other than the one they came in (do not use soft drinks bottles or any container that would confuse someone about the contents), and
- return unused medicines to the chemist.



## Security and Crime Prevention

The following advice may be useful to help protect you against crime.

- Close all windows and lock front and back doors when you go out.
- At night close windows on the ground floor, or near pipes or flat roofs.
- Consider fitting security locks to doors.
- Do not leave keys under a mat or on a string inside the letterbox.
- Never leave notes outside for callers or friends.
- Cancel regular deliveries, such as milk or newspapers, when you go away.
- Always ask for proof of identity from callers before you let them in. Never let anyone into your home unless you have seen their identity card.
- If you are suspicious about a caller contact the Police on **0845 2777444**.
- When you go away you may want to ask a trusted neighbour or friend to keep an eye on your home. Leave them a contact address.
- If you plan to be away from your property for more than 28 days we ask that you let us know and tell us when you plan to return. It would be useful for us to have a contact number in case of emergencies. Please contact our Estate Management Team on **01395 516551 ext 2381 / 2396**.

## Asbestos in the home

Building materials containing asbestos were widely used from 1930 to around 1980. So homes and flats built or refurbished at this time may contain asbestos materials.

Asbestos cement products are the most widely used asbestos material.

- Asbestos materials in good condition that cannot readily be damaged are often best left where they are.
- Avoid disturbing or damaging materials in good condition.
- Do not drill, cut or disturb any materials which you believe may contain asbestos.
- If you damage or have deteriorating asbestos materials in your home please contact us to seek advice and assistance.

## Pest Control

We offer a pest control service for dealing with rats in people's homes, for which there is a small charge. The service can also deal with other pests including, mice, wasps, flies, fleas, insects and squirrels, for which a variable fee is charged depending upon the species. If you would like a visit or more information please contact **0845 6010211** for pest control in East Devon.

The service does not deal with birds or large wild animals. In this instance you will need to contact **DEFRA** on **08459 33 55 77** or by email at [helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

You may wish to contact a pest control contractor of your own by looking in Yellow Pages or at [www.yell.com](http://www.yell.com) listed under 'Pest Control'.

## Home Insurance

We insure our council dwellings and in the event of fire, lightning, storm or flood we would claim on our insurance for the cost of repairing or rebuilding the property.

We do not insure any contents that belong to you or any improvements that may have been carried out by you. We strongly urge that you have your own contents insurance. For further details please see Leaflet 1 on 'Your Tenancy'.



## You can contact us by:

**Writing to:** Housing Services,  
East Devon District Council,  
Knowle, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 8HL

**Telephoning:** **01395 517458**

**Email:** [repairs@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:repairs@eastdevon.gov.uk)