

BERNIA



Staying safe in your home

Fire safety advice

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Communal areas

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Fire safety is everyone's responsibility and we all need to do our bit to keep each other safe. It is important everyone understands the fire safety procedures, especially in blocks of flats, where it is very important to always keep corridors and walkways free of obstructions.



Top tip:

Get out. Stay out. Call 999

In your home

If there is a fire in your home

- Alert your household and get out quickly
- Don't tackle the fire yourself, but leave it to the professionals
- Don't waste time investigating what's happened or rescuing valuables
- If smoke is present, keep low
- Before you open a door check if it's warm with the back of your hand. If it is, don't open it, there may be a fire on the other side
- Keep calm and close the doors behind you to prevent the spread of smoke and fire
- Call 999, even if you think someone else may have already done it. 999 calls are free
- If you cannot make voice calls, you can contact the 999 emergency services by SMS text from your mobile phone. You will only be able to use this service if you have registered with emergency SMS first. Text 'register' to 999. You will get a reply - then follow the instructions you are sent.

If your escape route in your home is blocked

- Try and get everyone into one room, ideally with a window and a phone
- Be ready to describe where you are and the quickest way to reach you
- Put material around the door to prevent smoke from entering the room
- Open the window and call for help
- If you are on the ground or first floor, you may be able to escape through the window. Try and find things to cushion your fall, and then lower yourself down
- If you can't open the window, you may be able to break the bottom corner. Use a towel or blanket to make jagged edges safe.



Plan your escape

To ensure your, and your families, safety in an emergency, you should make sure you have planned what to do if a fire breaks out in your home. Draw up a floor plan of your home that will show at least two escape routes from each room

If anyone in the home is slow to react or has mobility issues, adapt the plan to suit their needs. Mobility aids and any methods of calling for help should always be kept close to hand (e.g. mobile phone/telecare alarm or pendant)

If you have children or vulnerable adults in your home, it is particularly important to make sure everyone knows what to do in the event of a fire. Children tend to hide when they don't know what to do so teach them how to escape without adult help

Keep door and window keys available where everyone can find them.



Top tip:
Plan an escape



Top tip:
Show guests the escape route

General fire safety do's and don'ts in your home

- **DO NOT** cover electric heaters with washing
- **DO NOT** leave the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher on when you go out or go to bed. Their high speed of operation, friction and motors mean they can be a fire risk
- **DO NOT** overload adaptors with too many plugs.

Balconies

- **DO** use chairs and furniture that can be moved easily, portable clothes dryers etc
- **DO NOT** have permanent or heavy furniture and constructions on your balcony
- **DO NOT** use barbeques indoors or on your balcony
- **DO NOT** install a fixed washing line
- **DO NOT** store hazardous items including plastic storage sheds on your balcony
- **DO NOT** store large amounts of items and NEVER store flammable material

Electrics

- **DO** make sure all electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark when you buy them
- **DO** remove fluff from the lint filter every time you use a tumble dryer
- **DO** check hidden cables and leads, e.g. behind furniture or under carpets and mats. Replace any that are worn
- **DO** keep hot electrical items, e.g. irons, hair straighteners, away from curtains, carpets or anything else that could catch fire. **DO NOT** leave them plugged in and unattended
- **DO** unplug appliances that are not in use, especially heaters and irons
- **DO** look out for signs of dangerous or loose wiring such as scorch marks, hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that trip for no obvious reason, or flickering lights
- **DO** check that you use the right fuse in plugs and the recommended bulb wattage in light fittings to prevent overheating
- **DO NOT** buy cheap, counterfeit chargers for items with Lithium batteries
- **DO NOT** overload electrical sockets or extension cables and watch out for faulty and over-heating electrical equipment and wiring/cables.



Know your limits



5 AMP+
5 AMP+
3AMP=
13 AMP

Fire safety in the kitchen

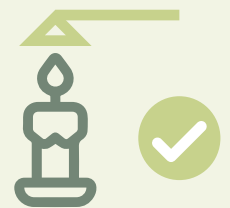
- Take pans off the heat or turn them down if you must leave the kitchen whilst cooking, and make sure you turn the cooker off when you have finished
- Take care if you're wearing loose clothing as it can easily catch fire
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the hob
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean and in good working order. A build-up of fat and grease can ignite a fire
- Take special care when deep fat frying. If the oil starts to smoke, it is too hot and could catch fire. Turn off the heat and leave it to cool
- Never put metal in the microwave.





Naked flames

- Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully. Never smoke in bed
- Make sure your ashtray can't tip over and is made of material that won't burn
- Take extra care if you have been drinking, you are tired or taking prescription drugs
- Portable gas heaters must not be used
- Place candles in a heat resistant holder on a stable surface, which won't be knocked over. Don't place them next to anything that can catch fire easily
- Make sure you put out any candles, incense and oil burners when you leave the room and especially before bed
- Keep matches and any other sources of ignition out of reach of children.



Top tip:
Put it out. Right out.

Communal areas

Keep communal areas clear including storing rubbish

Communal areas are generally internal spaces which are shared by all people within the building and are those which lead from the entrance door of your home all the way to the final exit door of your building. These areas must always be kept clear so you can get out of your home if a fire breaks out.

Why?

- Stored items can prevent access for the emergency services
- They can encourage the spread of fire and may give off toxic smoke
- These items pose a trip hazard and may prevent your, or your neighbours, escape
- It makes it harder for others to start a fire deliberately.

What items are you permitted to have in the common areas?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ✗ Mobility scooters | ✗ Pictures/cork boards |
| ✗ Prams | ✗ Cupboards/shoe racks |
| ✗ Bicycles | ✓ Small natural pot plants on window sills |
| ✗ Furniture or garden furniture | ✓ Small flame-retardant door mats |
| ✗ Clothing/shoes etc | |

- **DO NOT** interfere with any fixtures or fittings that are fixed to the walls of the communal area that are there for your safety
- **DO NOT** block any designated passageway or escape route. It must be kept clear so you can escape.

Rubbish

- **DO** dispose of your rubbish via the rubbish chute or refuse bins in the designated areas of the building
- **DO NOT** leave rubbish or other items for collection in the corridor
- **DO NOT** allow junk mail to collect on the floor of the communal area. This can be the seat of a fire or can lead to you slipping when exiting the building.

In case of an emergency



Fire Action

If you live in a communal block (flat or shared accommodation) there will already be a fire action plan for your building which may be 'stay put' or 'simultaneous evacuation'. Make sure you know where the nearest fire exit is and plan a primary and secondary back up route.

If you live in a communal block look out for fire action notices like this in the entrance to your building and at final fire exit doors

- You should familiarise yourself with this notice and all escape routes out of your building. The best escape route is the usual way out of your home, but you should plan an alternative if possible, in case it is blocked.

If fire breaks out in your home...

If you see or hear of a fire in another part of the building...

To call the fire service...

Smoke alarms

- Ensure smoke alarms are fitted in your home. Smoke alarms save lives, but only if they are working. Test them regularly, at least once every week. If you do not have any smoke alarms fitted or they are faulty ring 0344 800 3800. Don't put smoke alarms in or near the kitchen or in the bathroom where smoke or steam can set them off by accident.
- Please refer to the leaflet 'Smoke, fire and carbon monoxide alarms for more details information'

Fire Doors

What is a fire door?

Fire doors create a barrier from fire and toxic smoke, preventing them from travelling around a building during a fire. This keeps any damage which may be caused by a fire to a small area, allowing for evacuation, stay put and safe access for the emergency services.

In a block of flats, you will find fire doors on the stairwells, the corridors, the flat front doors and in areas where there is a risk of combustion, such as bin storage or mains electricity service cupboard.

Sometimes you will find fire doors inside flats, but this depends on the specific design and layout of the individual flat.

It is vital that all fire doors to the entrance of your flat and the communal areas of the building work properly when a fire breaks out. So it's important that these fire doors, are fit for purpose and are functioning correctly.

- Fire doors should be kept shut when not in use
- Residents or their guests should not tamper with fire doors, including their self-closing devices
- Residents should report any fault or damage to the fire door, its hardware (including the self-closing device) or its frame immediately to Bernicia.

Fire doors to the front door of your flat

If you live in a building that has communal areas (e.g. a flat or shared accommodation), and the front door of your home faces onto the common area of the building, it needs to be a fire door because they help to prevent fire from spreading.

Flat entrance doors are particularly important in preventing the spread of smoke or a fire, because in blocks of flats, most fires occur within the flats themselves, and the flat entrance door prevents the spread of fire and smoke into the common parts, stopping other residents from being placed at risk.

- Your front door is critical in preventing fire from spreading into the communal areas and escape routes or from spreading from these communal areas into your home. Make sure all doors and any fire doors fitted within your property close properly. Never wedge open a fire door
- Front doors must have a self-closing device, so this should never be removed or altered in any way. If there is any damage to your front door, its ironmongery or it does not self-close into the door frame, please get in touch with us to report the issue. We will make an appointment with you to inspect the door and carry out any necessary repairs
- Do not alter your front door in any way. Do not drill, cut, screw, nail anything into the face of the door. This can cause damage and make it less likely to work properly in an emergency
- Altering your letterbox or adding a cat flap to your door will affect the fire safety of your home and the entire building. Even minor alterations can affect the design of the building's fire safety systems
- Your front door may have seals in the edge of the door or within the door frame. These are intended to create a seal when the door is closed which prevents smoke from entering or escaping from your flat in the event of a fire. Do not paint over the seals on a fire door as this would make it less likely to work properly in an emergency
- Never interfere with any fixtures associated with any fire door including the handles, hinges, self-closing devices, smoke seals, glazing including any glazing beading and locking mechanisms
- If you have a fire-resistant door in your home, you must first seek written permission if you wish to make alterations to it so that Bernicia can properly assess the fire safety implications
- **If your door, its letterbox, the seals or any of the hardware has been damaged, please report it to us for inspection and repair.**



Fire doors in communal areas

In a block of flats, you will find fire doors to stairwells, lobbies and corridors. These keep the stairways and lobbies free from fire and smoke, so that they can safely be used by residents and others who might need to leave the building during a fire, and to assist firefighters during firefighting operations

You will also see them protecting areas where there is a risk of combustion, such as bin storage or mains electricity service cupboard.

The doors to the hallways and stairways within the common areas help protect the escape routes. They prevent fire and smoke from spreading and entering these areas and from blocking your means of escape. To do this, the doors are fitted with a self-closing device which closes the door into the door frame after the door has been used. These doors should never be propped or wedged open for any reason or for any period of time, no matter how short.

If you notice any damage to the fire doors in the communal areas or they do not self-close after you use them, please get in touch with us to report the issue. We will then visit to inspect the door and carry out any necessary repairs.

Leaseholder

When carrying out changes to your flat, you should ensure that any material building alterations are agreed and checked by local building control to ensure that they comply with the Building Regulations (including those which may affect the structure or fire protection of your flat and therefore the rest of the building). You should notify Bernicia prior to carrying out these alterations and provide the required certification.

If you wish to replace or change your flat entrance doors in any way (including the self-closing mechanism), you should always consult Bernicia and local building control body before making any changes.

You should examine the details of your lease contract and consult Bernicia prior to carrying out any repairs or changing the front door to your flat. You may find that you have responsibility to ensure that a suitable fire rated door with all its compatible components is fitted.

BERNICIA

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