

Fire & General Safety in Communal Areas of Flats and Apartment Blocks



10 Top Tips for Landlords and Managing Agents

- 1 Have you had a fire & general risk assessment carried out for your communal areas? Ideally, these should be undertaken by a Fire & Safety professional and will focus on the safety of all persons in or around the premises. Additionally, they might identify control measures required such as fire alarms to provide early warning of a fire or perhaps emergency lighting to aid in the evacuation of the premises, in the event of a power failure.
- 2 Are your communal areas free from combustible / flammable materials? There have been incidents in the past whereby the spread of a fire has accelerated due to paper, furniture, bikes and even prams being stored in communal areas. They should be kept clear at all times.
- 3 Have cupboards in communal areas become the dumping ground for combustible / flammable materials; for example, unwanted junk mail, paints used for decorating, overflow storage of personnel items from resident's flats? These cupboards should be checked and kept clear.
- 4 Are communal areas free from obstructions, not only are they a fire risk (as above) but they may also impede the safe evacuation of the premises. Your exit route could have plant pots, bikes, tables etc. Imagine that space with little or no light and covered by smoke. Keeping them clear saves lives.
- 5 Have you got a fire alarm and emergency lighting fitted? Where they have been fitted, there is a requirement that they are subject to regular testing and inspection by a 3rd party. Have you the documents for these checks.... again, it's something you required by law to have.
- 6 What is the condition of the floor surfaces? Are there damaged sections of carpet or a defective step that may be a potential trip hazard? A regular regime of documented checks is a must by you and (as a risk assessment) by a 3rd party.
- 7 Is any glazing safety rated? This is particularly the case cross corridor doors – in that they could be accidentally struck by a person causing serious laceration injuries. Is the glazing fire rated to help stop the spread of fire?
- 8 Is any glazing safety rated? This is particularly the case cross corridor doors – in that they could be accidentally struck by a person causing serious laceration injuries. Is the glazing fire rated to help stop the spread of fire?
- 9 Have your communal areas ever been checked for the presence of asbestos containing materials (ACMs)? Those responsible for communal areas have a duty to ascertain whether the premises contain ACMs and if so where it is and what condition it is in, to assess the risk and to plan to manage that risk.
- 10 What is the condition of the electrical installation within the communal areas? Has it ever been tested? Defective electrical systems are a significant ignition source. Check the dates on your last inspection – is it due...were there any recommendations from the last inspection that are outstanding? Also...check those electrical cupboards for holes, as these could result in smoke spreading from the communal areas and into apartments. Also check the cupboard doors – are they fire rated, lockable and (as mentioned previously) clear from combustibles?

Lots of things to check – but by doing so, you could save lives. As a managing agent or landlord, please make sure that you are maintaining the communal areas of your properties before it's too late. For further information or to have a chat about your safety concerns and to book an assessment – contact Health and Safety Mentor today.

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