

Fire safety and frequently asked questions

Do we own any Tower blocks?

The Council has no tower blocks in its management. The definition of high rise is 6 storeys and above.

I live in a block - how do I know I'm safe?

Independent assessors carry out regular fire risk assessments on your building. They tell us what actions we need to take to minimise the risk from fire and we have programmes in place to complete the actions. We are commencing a programme of reviewing these over the next few months as we complete works arising from the current ones.

We also carry out monthly fire alarm testing in our Homes for Independent Living (sheltered) schemes. We also undertake periodic testing of our emergency lighting. Every year where applicable we test fire extinguishers in the lift motor and plant rooms. Every five years we test the communal electrics.

Is my door a fire door?

We're upgrading fire doors in flats. If you'd like us to come and look at your door let us know and we'll arrange an inspection.

I haven't seen any fire safety notices in my block?

"What to do in the event of Fire Action Notices" should be displayed in every block. We know (from our recent inspections) some are missing and we're replacing them urgently. If you have none where you live please contact the Housing Officer Duty Line on 01634 333344 and we will arrange to put them up.

Did you take part in the government survey?

No as we do not own any Tower blocks, we have confirmed this to the Government.

Do any of your buildings have cladding?

None of our blocks have the type of cladding associated with the fire at Grenfell Tower.

We have undertaken a desk top review of our low and medium rise flats and not identified any significant concerns.

There are many other types of cladding on buildings, timber, plastic etc., These only cover small areas of the building for decorative purposes and provide minimal risk.

Why are fire extinguishers not fitted in the common areas of flats?

Kent Fire & Rescue don't recommend using fire extinguishers unless you've been trained. Also, there's evidence that vandals set them off and can cause damage.

Why don't you fit sprinklers?

Current building regulations for **new** residential blocks over 30m high are that they must be fitted with sprinklers (to meet Approved Document B standards). A complete review is now underway by the Government. Once completed, we'll act on any recommendations they give us.

Where should smoke alarms be?

If you live in a house or flat you should have a smoke alarm in the hallway (outside the kitchen) and in every hallway on every floor. If you live in a bungalow, that's 1, if in a house that's 2, If you don't have the right amount let us know by dialling the Repairs free phone on 0800 0730300.

I live in a block, what should I do if there's a fire?

Stay put (unless the fire's in your flat or home), unless the "Fire action Notice" says otherwise. Nearly all of our blocks have a stay put policy which is designed to save lives. But, if in doubt - get out. Don't use the lift - stair wells are protected

If you discover a fire in your flat, don't try to tackle it. Leave making sure the front door is closed and call 999.

If you're in a supported living scheme, your scheme manager will have told you what to do in the event of a fire. But if you are in doubt please ask them.

What is stay put? It means unless the fire is in their own flat they should not evacuate and wait for the fire service. Unless the "Fire action Notice" says otherwise, nearly all our blocks have a stay put policy. It leaves escape routes clear for those who need to get out and for the fire service to enter.

Will Kent Fire and Rescue visit me?

Kent Fire and Rescue are prioritising visits to Tower Blocks and as Medway Council does not directly manage any they will not be visiting in the immediate future.

More information

Our website has the latest updates on fire safety

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/housing/counciltenantsleaseholders/fireriskawareness.aspx>

Kent Fire and Rescue Service have lots of advice on their website:

<http://www.kent.fire-uk.org/your-safety/home-safety/>

They also offer free safety advice and services to everyone. If you're worried or have a particular concern that isn't answered above please get in touch.

If you have any concerns or questions, call us on 0800 0730300. and specialist staff will be able to answer any questions

What you can do to stay safe:

- Keep communal areas free from clutter and rubbish or any items bikes / scooters etc.
- Make sure fire doors are closed and not wedged open
- Report any damaged fire doors or doors that aren't closing
- Don't smoke in the communal areas and tell us if anyone does
- Test your smoke alarm at least once a week
- If you live in a flat your front door to the communal area should close automatically. Don't remove the device that closes the door.
- If your front door doesn't close automatically tell us

Remember:

- Your safety is our priority
- In the event of a fire don't use the lift – stair wells are protected
- If you have any concerns or questions, call us on 01634 333444 and staff will be able to answer any questions
- Or take a look at Kent Fire and Rescue website