

TENANT GUIDE

EMERGENCIES

- Gas Leaks

If you smell gas you should call the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999** and **vacate the building until help arrives**. Remember to ventilate the room as much as possible and not to turn on lights or electrical appliances or have any sparks or open flame, including cigarettes in the property.

Gas leaks can be hazardous to your health and property, so it's important to deal with them quickly. The National Gas Emergency Service Hotline is your first port of call if you suspect a gas leak. You should also notify your gas supplier of the situation.

The following FAQ give helpful advice to follow if you suspect a gas leak either in your home or out in the street.

What do I do if I smell gas or suspect a gas leak?

If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak, you should call the **National Gas Emergency Service** immediately - contact them 24/7 on **0800 111 999**. For those who are deaf or hearing impaired and have a Minicom or Textphone, the number to call is **0800 371 787**. They will repair and fix the gas leak completely free of charge if it's found to be external to your property. A trained operator will ask the following questions:

- The address/location/postcode of the suspected gas escape or gas emergency
- How many people are at the property
- Where the smell is most noticeable
- How long the smell has been noticeable
- Any affected neighbours
- Your name and phone number
- Any special circumstances or access information

If the gas leak is found to be internal, the National Gas Emergency Service is only permitted to spend thirty minutes maximum in their attempt to locate and repair the problem. Should they be unsuccessful during this allotted time, they may have to shut off all or part of the gas supply. It will then be your responsibility to repair the leak.

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Gas Safety Certificate

Although a Gas Safety Certificate cannot predict a gas leak, it can inform us in advance if there is a potential safety aspect that needs attention. A CORGI/GasSafe Engineer will contact you annually to renew the certificate. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated to make sure that this legally required obligation is met.

- Burst and Frozen Pipes

Steps to take when you have a burst or frozen pipe emergency, plus preventative measures to keep your home's water supply running smoothly.

A burst pipe is classed as a water emergency - it can cause serious damage to your home's structure and electrical wiring. The following steps describe what you should do as soon as you discover a burst pipe

1. Turn off the main stop tap - you should find this under the kitchen sink or where the service pipe enters your home.

- Drain the system - turn on all your cold taps.
- If water has been leaking through for some time and the ceilings are bulging - be careful, rooms may not be safe to enter.
- If you notice the leak quickly you can catch dripping water in buckets. Make a small hole in the ceiling to let water out if it starts to bulge. Make sure there is a large container to hand to catch the water, as there may be a large amount at first.

2. Turn off water heating systems

- Switch off the central heating, immersion heater and any other water heating systems.
- If the central heating uses solid fuel, let this die out.
- Once water heating has shut down, turn on the hot taps to help drain the system.

3. Turn off the electrics

If water leaks near your electrics or electrical appliances, switch off the mains immediately. If it is wet, don't touch them! Rubber gloves are recommended to be worn when switching off the mains during a water leak, as an extra precaution.

4. Call a professional to repair the damage if out of office hours

A frozen pipe is also an emergency, because this will cause it to burst causing thawed water to come pouring from the break.

The following steps describe what you should do as soon as you discover a frozen pipe:

1. Turn off the water supply

- Turn off the main stop tap. You should find this under the kitchen sink or where the service pipe enters your home.
- Turn off the stopcock in your cold water tank if you have one, it's usually found in the attic or loft.
- Contact a plumber if out of hours. Most out of hours plumbers may require immediate payment, check their policy before they arrive.

Winter Care – Preventing Burst and Frozen Pipes

Try the following care tips:

- Open the loft trap door on cold days to let heat in.
- If you're away for a while, spending winter somewhere warmer perhaps, then ask a friend or relative to check on your home and make sure pipes haven't burst or frozen. Make sure that the Property Manager is provided with contact details of this person in case of an emergency.
- Make sure you know where your stop tap is and check regularly that you can turn it off easily in an emergency. It's handy to label it so you remember where it is in a panic.
- In very cold weather the heating will need to be on low or set to come on a couple of times a day, especially if you're going away. Most modern boilers have a frost protection thermostat, which turns on automatically if the temperature drops to a level that will cause your pipes to freeze. If this is not done, then you may be responsible for the cost of repairs.

- **Electrical Emergencies**

Be prepared when there's a power shortage in your home.

Unexpected electrical power failure can be a major annoyance if you're not prepared. The following tips will help to keep things smooth during a sudden power shortage.

- Keep a torch with fresh batteries in a place where you can reach it easily.
- Turn off your electrical appliances and lights but leave one light switched on so you know when the power is back on.
- Be careful if you use other forms of heating and lighting, such as paraffin heaters and candles.
- Remember that the doorbell will probably not work (unless it runs on batteries), nor will an alarm system (unless it has a battery back-up). This includes smoke alarms.
- If your electrical supplier has given forewarning of the power cut, boil some water and keep it in a thermos flask. You can use it to make hot drinks or fill a hot water bottle if it's cold.
- When your supply is back on, you will need to reset electric timers, alarm clocks and so on.
- Food in the freezer should keep for about eight hours without power. Do not open the freezer doors unless you have to. Check the food when the power is back on to make sure it hasn't thawed. If it has, it will have to be thrown away - don't refreeze it. You may be able to claim on your household contents insurance for any lost food. Check your policy to make sure.

An emergency is deemed to be where a problem places either you or the property in imminent danger of suffering harm, injury or damage. All other matters should be reported as soon as the office reopens.

When calling out of hours, the contractor will assess, so far as he is able, the seriousness of the situation. You should be aware that if a call out is subsequently not deemed to have been an emergency then you will be liable for the call out charge. Before placing a call regarding

loss of power, remember to check for obvious problems such as tripped residual circuit breakers (RCB's)/ blown fuses as well as checking if other properties in the building or area are similarly affected.

- Help is at hand twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year.
- Always carry out a few simple checks before reporting a problem.
- Only call out of hours in an emergency or you will be responsible for the cost.
- Have details of the make and model to hand before calling.

SMOKE DETECTORS & CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

Smoke and carbon monoxide (a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas) are silent killers.

- Never block air vents in rooms containing a gas or other carbon burning appliance.
- Protect yourself with an adequate number of alarms.
- Test alarms weekly using the button located on the alarm.
- Replace batteries regularly.
- Keep alarms free from dust and other obstructions.
- If your landlord has provided an alarm(s), whilst replacing batteries is your responsibility, faults should be reported immediately.
- Portable alarms, which you can take with you when you move out, are readily available.

LEGIONELLA

Legionella bacteria, which can live in water systems, can pose potential health problems, particularly for higher risk groups. Whilst such problems are rare when a system is operating normally, you should nonetheless take reasonable precautions.

- When a hot water system is operating normally water should be delivered to outlets such as showers and taps at between 50 & 55 degrees.
- Promptly report any problems with hot water not being delivered within these tolerances.
- Care should be exercised when testing the water temperature to avoid scalding.
- When first using the water system after a period of non-use (1 week or longer), allow at least 1 hour for the hot water to reach temperature.
- Showers and taps should be flushed through following a period of non-use.
- Showers and taps (especially those with aerators) should be regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- Douches and taps with pre-set mixers operating below 50 to 55 degrees should be cleaned and disinfected more regularly. Use of these should be avoided by higher risk groups,

including those suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease, and people whose immune system is impaired.

- Hot tubs and whirlpool baths should be cleaned and operated in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.

RENTAL PAYMENTS

Always check that payment instructions to your bank have been received and acted upon to ensure that rental payments are promptly made. The Standing Order should be set up so that the rent is paid on or before the day that the tenancy agreement started. It is your responsibility to ensure that this has been carried out.

It is important that you cancel your Standing Order once your final rental payment has been made. Halls cannot cancel the standing order on your behalf, and we cannot be held responsible for any delay in recovering your money if you forget.

UTILITIES

Under normal circumstances, with all long-term tenancies the payment of utility charges and council tax will be your responsibility as tenant. We will provide Utility Companies and the Local Authority with meter readings and occupants details. It is important to ensure that you manage the bills appropriately.

It is important that you ensure your obligations for the transfer and payment of utility charges and council tax are met as neither we, nor your landlord or any of the transfer companies we use can accept liability for unpaid or estimated accounts.

INSURANCE

Your landlord is responsible for insuring his possessions and you are responsible for insuring yours. You should also hold tenant liability insurance to cover your possessions and other eventualities. We can provide contact details on where to purchase these policies if needed.

FAQS

- When something breaks down what should I do?

As tenant you are responsible for promptly reporting maintenance issues as they arise. Where this involves an appliance apparently not working, firstly read the instruction manual as any unnecessary call out charges will be your responsibility. Most instruction manuals provide a useful troubleshooting section.

When a breakdown occurs, your Property Manager will arrange for an approved contractor to visit as soon as is reasonably possible. It is important to remember that neither your Property Manager nor your landlord is able to insulate you from, or to compensate you for, the inconvenience that inevitably occurs when repairs are required. In the event of a breakdown your Property Manager will do everything reasonably possible to keep any inconvenience to you to a minimum.

As the colder weather approaches it is prudent to allow ample time to check that your heating system is operating correctly as any parts which may be required to correct a breakdown might not always be readily available. After reference to the instruction manual, please remember that with gas fired boilers you should check if the pressure needs increasing. With central heating systems, to avoid all or part of a radiator remaining cold you will usually need to bleed air from the radiator when the system is first switched on in the autumn

These simple steps will help avoid you paying for unnecessary call out charges.

- Always check the instruction manual before reporting a problem.
- Remember to check that your heating is working before the winter months.

- **What if I can't operate an appliance or the heating and hot water?**

Instruction manuals should be available within the property to assist you in familiarising yourself with the appliances and equipment provided. Please contact your Property Manager if an instruction manual is missing. Alternatively, and to save time and inconvenience, manuals are often available on line.

- Always read the instruction manual.
- If an instruction manual is missing copies are often available on line.

- **Who is responsible for changing light bulbs and batteries?**

Light bulbs and batteries are a tenant responsibility. Care should be exercised when fittings are above head height or located in areas accessible only by ladder. Subject to payment in advance your Property Manager will be able to make arrangements for a handyman to attend to this on your behalf.

- **Who is responsible if the drains become blocked?**

Unless the problem results from a failure in the sewerage or drainage system, you as tenant are responsible for clearing blockages. Subject to any restrictions on the use of chemicals with septic tanks, regular use of drain cleaners in bathrooms and kitchens helps avoid blockages.

- **What if there is a septic tank or sewerage system?**

Please check the Agreement for your obligations which should include details of how often the tank needs to be emptied together with any restrictions on what can and cannot be put through the drainage and sewerage system. We recommend keeping proof of the tank being emptied.

- **Who looks after the garden?**

Responsibility for maintaining the garden in seasonal order, and for clearing patios, balconies, drains and gutters of fallen leaves will be your responsibility. Most Agreements will prohibit you from lopping or destroying trees, plants and shrubs; however, reasonable pruning is expected. Planters and pots should be watered as required.

- **Ventilation/Condensation?**

It is a condition of your tenancy that the property is kept ventilated so as to avoid the build-up of condensation and mould. This is particularly important in well insulated modern properties. To help avoid claims against your deposit for unreasonable deterioration always use extraction fans and ventilation systems whilst regularly opening windows to allow fresh

air to enter the property. Moisture should be wiped off windows as soon as possible, and bathroom tiles should be cleaned with appropriate mildew-removing products regularly.

- **Can I hang pictures?**

Subject to the provisions of the Agreement yes, providing the number is not excessive and that you use commercially produced picture hooks making good any damage at the end of the tenancy.

- **What if I need more keys to the property?**

Subject to written consent you are, at your own expense, able to have additional sets of keys cut. Details will be held on file, and all keys must be returned at the end of the tenancy.

Inspections and Property Visits

As part of our agreement with the Landlord, and to make sure that the property you rent is kept to a safe and habitable standard, your Property Manager or a colleague will visit the property periodically, at a mutually convenient time. These visits are not to judge your housekeeping or organisational skills, they are a chance for you to show us any issues that are difficult to describe, and to reassure the Landlord that the property is being looked after. A copy of the report will be sent to you to keep for your records.