

Homesafe

A handbook on home safety and security for residents of council properties



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Homesafe

Introduction

This booklet gives safety advice to Wandsworth tenants and leaseholders. It provides information about how to make your home safer and more secure. It also offers advice on a range of health and safety issues, such as fire, flood and electrical hazards, as well as providing details about a number of organisations who can advise on home security.

Homesafe is intended as a guide only, you should seek expert advice from the appropriate organisations such as the fire service, police service or utility companies if you have any concerns or queries.

Fire

Fire safety

Your building has been designed and built with fire safety in mind. In single dwellings and blocks of flats, the walls, doors and stairs, have been specially designed to resist fire and stop the spread of smoke.

The council undertakes regular Fire Risk Assessments to the communal areas of all its blocks. These are reviewed and updated every year.

Fire doors and dry riser inlets

It is essential that fire doors and their closing mechanism are properly maintained. They should be kept closed and you should never wedge fire doors open.

Fire safety doors and dry riser inlets are inspected every week to ensure that they are in full working order. Dry risers are pipes that allow fire fighters to send water to every level of a building without using hoses.

Access to your estate or block

Roads and other communal areas are designed so that emergency vehicles can access buildings. Never obstruct access routes with vehicles, dustbins or any other bulky items.

Keeping communal areas safe

Communal areas such as corridors, staircases and balconies should be kept clear. Domestic waste and rubbish should be put in bins or chutes. Do not store or leave objects in communal areas. This might stop people escaping and may hinder fire fighters from rescuing people.

It is against the law to smoke in communal areas of any public building. If you need further information about Smoke Free England see the contacts section.

Escaping from a fire

These simple steps could save your life.

Fire in your home

If there is a fire **in your home**:

- Tell others - shout 'fire'.
- Leave immediately, closing the door behind you
- Dial 999 for the fire brigade.

If the fire is in your path and you cannot escape, it may be safer to stay in the room you are in. Close the door and block any gaps to stop smoke coming under the door, open a window, phone or shout for help and wait to be rescued.

In addition:

- Before opening a door, check closed doors/handles with the back of your hand. Never open the door if the handle feels warm. There may be fire on the other side.
- If there is a lot of smoke, get down and crawl as near to the floor as possible where the air will be cleaner.
- Never assume it is a false alarm.
- Keep calm and do not panic.
- Do not stop to pick up valuables.
- Do not investigate the fire or source of it. Do not try and put out the fire unless you can do so quickly and safely.
- Never return to a burning building.

Fire in a communal area

If there is a fire **outside your home** in another property or a communal area such as a corridor:

- Dial 999 for the fire brigade.
- It is usually safer to stay in your home until you can be safely evacuated by fire fighters.
- If smoke or flames enter your home, leave at once and close the door behind you.
- Always use the stairs - do not use a lift.

In addition:

- If there is a lot of smoke, get down and crawl as near to the floor as possible where the air will be cleaner.
- If it is possible tell any neighbours who may be affected.
- Do not go onto a balcony unless it leads to a fire escape route.

Fire

Calling the fire brigade

- In an emergency dial 999 ask for the fire service.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Give your name, phone number and precise address.
- Say where the fire is in your home – e.g. the kitchen.
- Say if anyone is trapped in the property or in a particular room.

Also, if you live in a flat or maisonette give the:

- Address, including the number of your flat (if the fire is in your home).
- Tell them which floor the fire is on (e.g. fifth floor).

Preventing fires

Putting in place some simple measures can stop a fire starting in your home and protect your means of escape. Fire can start when you least expect it, often during the night, and these steps could save you and your family's lives.

- Fit a smoke alarm and test it once a week.
- Do not wedge self-closing doors open, they should be kept closed to prevent fire and smoke spreading.
- Keep all escape routes clear, especially corridors, hallways and staircases.
- If you live above the ground floor, do not fit locks that require a key to unlock them from inside the property.
- Make an escape plan to ensure you know what to do if there is a fire, this should include a safe escape route.
- If you have a secondary means of escape make sure it is not blocked and can be opened quickly and easily.
- Close doors before you go out and carry out checks before you go to bed.
- Buy a fire blanket or domestic fire extinguisher.

In addition:

- Put out cigarettes and candles properly.

- Never smoke in bed, or anywhere else where you may doze off.
- Keep matches, lighters and candles out of the reach of children.
- Be careful with cookers and appliances, fires often start in kitchens.
- Check that plugs, leads and electrical equipment are safe and well maintained.
- Do not overload electrical sockets.
- Use a good fireguard, if required.
- Do not sit too close to a fire or heater.
- Do not dry clothes too close to heaters or fires.
- Do not put heaters or lamps near curtains or furniture.
- Do not pour or throw water on electrical appliances or fire that has been caused by an electrical appliance.
- Do not pour or throw water on electrical appliances or fire that has been caused by fat or cooking oil.
- Ensure furniture is fire resistant.

Get a smoke alarm

The fire service recommends that all households get a smoke alarm fitted. This gives extra time for you and others to escape from a fire.

Smoke alarms detect smoke and fires at their earliest stages and set off an alarm to warn you and your family of the danger.

The housing department fits smoke alarms in tenanted properties. We will fit alarms to existing tenants' homes, on request and at no charge. For further information contact your estate manager (see page 20).

Alternatively, smoke alarms are widely available from DIY shops and supermarkets. If you have difficulties, local voluntary organisations may be able to fit the alarm for you.

Fire

The London Fire Brigade gives the following advice:

- Fit a smoke alarm and test it once a week.
- Buy a good smoke alarm that conforms to British Standards.
- Fit a smoke alarm in each room if possible (except bathrooms). At the minimum fit a smoke alarm to each floor of your home, at the bottom of the staircase and on each landing.
- Change the battery when required or at least every year. Never remove the batteries other than to replace them.
- Some smoke alarms for people with a hearing impairment set off a vibrating pad or flashing light.

Bedtime checks

There are a number of steps you can take to check everything is safe before going to bed to reduce the risk of fire in your home.

- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances, except those that are meant to stay on, such as a fridge or freezer.
- Put out cigarettes and candles properly, check embers are cold and then empty ashtrays.
- Check your cooker is turned off.
- Turn off heaters and use a fireguard (open fires).
- Turn off electric blankets before you get in bed and have them checked by an expert at least every three years.
- Never use a hot water bottle and electric blanket together.
- Make sure exits are clear.
- Close all doors, as this prevents fire from spreading.
- Ensure you have access to a phone.
- Keep door and window keys where you can find them quickly.

Escape planning

You will only have a short time to get out. So make an escape plan and test it so you know what to do if there is a fire.

- Plan your escape route rather than waiting until there is a fire.
- Think of another way out in case your normal route is blocked.
- Keep escape routes and exits clear - do not put bikes, prams or other objects in corridors, hallways or staircases.
- Make sure you and your family know the escape plan and tell them where door and window keys are kept.
- You might also want to keep valuable documents in a metal fire-proof box.

Security Grilles

Fitting security grilles to front doors and windows may make your home feel safer from intruders. However, this may make it more difficult for fire fighters to rescue you.

The council does not permit residents to fit security grilles over front doors and any internal window grilles must conform to building regulations.

For further advice on security grilles contact your area housing team.

Free fire safety advice and assessments

If you are concerned that your home is at risk of fire, you can request a free home safety visit from your local fire service. They will inspect your home, help identify any potential fire risks, show you how to reduce or prevent fire danger and help you make a fire escape plan.

Who to contact

For further advice contact your estate manager, co-operative or resident management organisation (RMO). Alternatively, for information and advice about preventing fires in your home or for a free home safety check, contact the London Fire Brigade, see the contacts section or visit: www.london-fire.gov.uk or www.firekills.gov.uk

Electricity

Electricity is used throughout our homes. Appliances, plugs and cables that are old or poorly maintained can be a real danger and fire risk.

Your mains supply

Be sure you know how to turn off the electricity supply at the mains switch in case of an emergency. The mains switch will be on the consumer unit, known as the main fuse board, which is often situated in the hallway or under the stairs. When this switch is turned off the electricity supply to your home will be cut off.

Spotting the risks

There are particular danger signs to look out for on all electrical items in your home which will reduce or prevent an incident. Look out for:

- Hot plugs and sockets, fuses that frequently blow, flickering lights and scorch marks on sockets or plugs. These are all signs of loose wiring or another electrical problem that should be fixed.
- Overloaded sockets – too many plugs in one socket can overload it and lead to overheating or fire.
- Badly positioned cables – can lead to trips and falls or other accidents, such as a kettle being pulled from a work surface.
- Electricity and water – cables and plugs should never be located near water or in danger of getting wet. Make sure that electric fires, hair dryers etc. are kept away from water.
- Check the condition of sockets, cables and plugs regularly.
- Switch off electrical appliances when not in use and remove plugs from sockets.
- Make sure your electrical appliances are wired correctly.

live = brown or red wire,

neutral = blue or black wire,

earth = yellow and green or green wire.

Using the right plug fuses

Fuses in your plugs are designed to stop overheating, please see the guidance below to find the right fuse to use.

Appliances up to:

700 watts = 3 amp fuse

700 to 1,000 watts = 5 amp

1,000+ watts = 13 amp

Using adapters

It is safer to use a bar adapter than a block adapter. Only use one adapter per socket. Do not allow the total current used by the appliances plugged into an adapter to add up to more than 13 amps all together. Try to buy an adapter with a circuit breaker feature.

Mains fuses and circuit-breakers

Mains fuses and circuit-breakers are safety devices to cut off the electricity supply.

If a fuse blows it is your responsibility to replace it with the correct fuse. If a light or an electrical appliance does not work it may be because a fuse has blown. This might be because there was a fault with the appliance or because you were using too many electrical appliances at the same time and have overloaded the system.

If you are sure that the appliance is in good working order and that you have not overloaded the system, there might be an electrical fault.

Some homes have circuit-breakers instead of fuses as a safety cut-off for the electricity. A circuit-breaker is a switch, which turns off the electricity supply if there is a fault. Do the same safety checks as you would if a fuse has blown and reset the switch to on. If the circuit-breaker continues to switch off there might be an electrical fault.

Electricity

Electrical fires

Sometimes, a fire can be started by an electrical appliance or electrical fault; this is known as an electrical fire.

If you have an electrical fire in your home;

- Pull out the plug.
- Or switch off the power at the fuse box.

This may stop the fire immediately.

However,

- Never use water on an electrical fire.
- Do not take any personal risks.
- Call the emergency services on 999.

Who to contact

If you discover an electrical fault, tenants should report it to their estate manager, leaseholders are advised to contact a qualified electrician who is NICEIC registered, and residents of RMOs should contact their local office.

You can find further information in the contacts section.

Gas

Gas servicing

Tenants

If you have a council installed gas-fired heating or hot water system it will be serviced and inspected annually by the council's contractor. Even if you do not have gas appliances, the council will need to inspect all pipework annually.

Annual inspections take place for safety reasons. The council has a legal duty to inspect and properly maintain all gas appliances that they own. You **must** ensure that access is given to the council's contractors. Failure to give access may result in the council forcing entry or seeking a court injunction to enter the property and costs could be awarded against you.

You should report any faults and defects to the contractor, who is required to respond within 24 hours.

You can find the name and contact details of your contractor at:
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housingcontacts

You should not under any circumstances install your own gas-fired heating or hot water systems.

Gas cookers must be installed by a recognised Gas Safe registered contractor.

Leaseholders

You should have your gas appliances serviced by a Gas Safe registered contractor each year.

If you sublet your property you are required by law to arrange for gas appliances to be properly maintained and inspected every year by a Gas Safe registered contractor. A copy of the certificate must be given to your tenant.

Failure to observe these requirements may make you liable to prosecution. You must be able to produce proof of this inspection and annual service to the council at any time.

Gas leaks

If you think you have a gas leak turn off the gas supply at the meter, which is often situated in the hallway or under the stairs and immediately contact:

National Grid gas emergency (free phone) : 0800 111 999 or Wandsworth Emergency Control (WEC) (020) 8871 7490

If there is a suspected gas leak you should:

- Put out cigarettes.
- Open all doors and windows and keep them open until an official has dealt with the leak.
- Check if a gas tap has been left on accidentally or if a pilot light has gone out.
- Do not use matches or naked flames.
- Do not touch electrical switches, including lights and door bells.

All gas distribution companies are responsible for dealing with gas leaks and emergencies in their respective networks. If you smell gas or you suspect that there has been an escape of fumes such as carbon monoxide call the 24 hour National Emergency line **0800 111 999**.

Engineers will attend any gas leak free of charge. If the leak is inside your home, they will make it safe by turning off the supply. If there is a problem with an appliance or pipe work they will give you information about who to contact to have the appliance repaired.

Free services scheme

Some households can benefit from free services, such as free gas and electricity safety checks. The scheme is available to all household gas and electricity consumers who:

- Are of pensionable age.
- Have a disability (including visual and hearing impairment).
- Have long-term ill health.

Some services require you to be in receipt of a means or income tested benefit. However, please contact the individual energy supplier to find out if they operate a free service.

Gas

Priority services during interruptions

If you are disabled, chronically sick or of pensionable age and a gas emergency has resulted in your heating or cooking appliances being disconnected, you are entitled to receive alternative heating and cooking equipment for free until your normal appliances are fixed. To find out more about free services and the priority services schemes contact Citizen's Advice (formerly Consumer Direct service) 08454 04 05 06.

Liquid petroleum gas

The use and storage of liquid petroleum gas in flats and maisonettes is **BANNED** by the council.

Paraffin heaters

This form of heating can be dangerous and a major source of condensation. You must **not** have or use paraffin heaters in your home.

Carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning is sometimes referred to as a silent killer because:

- You can't see it.
- You can't taste it.
- You can't smell it.

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas which can build up when household gas appliances like boilers, water heaters and cookers are faulty or not getting enough oxygen to burn effectively.

The early symptoms of poisoning include tiredness, drowsiness, headache, pains in the chest and stomach pains. You are particularly vulnerable when you are asleep.

There is particular risk if you sleep in a room where an appliance, without a balanced-flue, is left burning at night. A balanced-flue appliance normally has a vent or flue outlet to an outside wall.

It is now illegal to convert or let a bedroom, which contains an open flue appliance without a safety device.

Carbon monoxide - what to look out for

Your appliance may be faulty if it has yellow or orange flames, soot or stains around it or if the pilot light frequently goes out or there is increased condensation inside your windows.

Carbon monoxide - what to do if you suspect a leak

- Switch off the appliance.
- Turn off the mains gas supply.
- Open all doors and windows to ventilate the rooms.
- Contact your GP for health advice.
- Tenants should contact the council and leaseholders should contact a Gas Safe registered installer or the emergency contacts overleaf.

Be carbon monoxide safe

Generally, you should ensure that air is circulating freely and there are no obstructions to flues or vents.

- Do not use a gas appliance if you suspect it is not working properly.
- Do not cover an appliance or block the vents.
- Do not block or obstruct any fixed ventilation, grilles or air bricks.
- Do not block or cover outside flues or chimneys.
- Do not fit draught stripping to doors of a room containing a gas appliance.

You can reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning by:

- Fitting a carbon monoxide alarm.
- Making sure ventilation is free flowing and outlets are free from blockages.
- Having gas appliances regularly serviced. The council carries out annual inspections of tenanted properties.

If you have any concerns about your appliance, tenants should contact their estate manager, in the first instance, or the National Grid (formerly Transco).

Gas

Who to contact

For further information and advice about gas and gas systems, tenants should contact their estate manager, leaseholders are advised to contact a Gas Safe registered supplier and residents of RMOs should contact their local office. You can find further information in the contacts section.

You also can seek advice from:

- Your gas supplier or the National Grid Gas Emergency (formerly Transco) freephone 0800 111 999.
- The Gas Safe Register
www.gassaferegister.co.uk or
0800 408 5500 (freephone)
- Or a Gas Safe registered contractor.
- Wandsworth Emergency Control (WEC) out of hours
(020) 8871 7490

Water

Water checks and quality

Drinking water in England and Wales is of a very high quality, however, on rare occasions you may have a problem with your drinking water. Water should be clear and bright; if it is discoloured, cloudy or has an unusual odour you should contact your water supplier.

Council quality checks

The council undertakes regular checks of communal stored water supplies on blocks and estates as well as boosted supplies of mains water and all communal heating systems.

Looking after your own water quality

To ensure water quality in your own home is kept to a high standard it is recommended that if your property is left empty for more than a week that you run the taps for a couple of minutes on your return and flush your toilet. Good hygiene and maintenance is important - taps, shower heads and toilets should be regularly cleaned and descaled as these are areas where bacteria can flourish.

Water mains and supply

Make sure you know where your mains water tap is located and how to turn off the water supply to your home.

The water system will not usually cause problems but it is important that you know what to do if something goes wrong. If you are not sure how the water supply to your home works, contact your estate manager, residents of RMOs should contact their local office.

Pipes and overflows

Burst pipes

If you have a burst pipe, there are a number of measures you can take to prevent further water damage or flooding:

- Turn off the water at the mains stopcock.
- Turn **on all cold** water taps - this will drain any remaining water from the system. But do not turn on hot water taps when draining tanks, this may cause more damage to the system.

- Wrap a cloth or something similar tightly around the leaking pipes, put a bucket under the pipe, if possible.
- Turn off the boiler and immersion heater. However, gas fires can still be used.
- Turn off electricity at the mains switch as water may have touched the electric system. Make sure a qualified electrician checks the whole system before turning the supply back on.

If you have a burst pipe, tenants should contact their estate manager, leaseholders should contact a qualified plumber and residents of RMOs should contact their local office.

Outside normal working hours tenants should contact Wandsworth Emergency Control (WEC) (020) 8871 7490.

Overflow problems

Overflow pipes are fitted to toilet cisterns and cold water tanks as safety outlets. If water continues to pour into tanks after they are full, the overflow pipe allows it to flow out.

Overflow problems can be caused by a sticking or faulty valve which should close when the tank is full. If the cistern or tank overflows, try the following:

- Flush the toilet.
- Press the ball-valve in the tank gently below the surface of the water and allow it to rise slowly. Try this three or four times.

If the overflow continues to run you should seek assistance, see the contacts section.

Water and cold weather

Water can cause all types of problems in cold weather, for example pipes might freeze and crack, so make sure you have put in place some simple measures before winter:

- Check where your mains water stopcock is and that it works.
- Check that tanks and pipes are well insulated.
- Make sure you have adequate home contents insurance, in case your contents are damaged by water or flooding.

Water

Frozen pipes

If you have frozen pipes:

- Check that the mains stopcock can be turned off, in case of leaks when the ice melts.
- Turn off the mains stopcock when you are not using the drinking water supply.
- Allow natural warm air to circulate around the tank and frozen pipework. Do not use any electrical appliance to speed up this process.
- Put out the fire if you have a solid fuel back boiler, as it could be dangerous if pressure builds up.
- If you have a gas-fired back boiler only use the gas fire, this will cut down the risk of damage to the boiler.
- Switch off the electric immersion heater if you have one.
- Do **not** use hot water taps until the water system has completely thawed because, if you have a copper tank, you might damage it.
- Do **not** try to clear any airlocks to get the water system working again until all the pipes, tanks and overflows have thawed out.

Condensation

Condensation is caused when warm moist air meets a cold surface.

The common sources are steam, tumble dryers and drying washing on radiators. In most cases, condensation can be prevented by allowing the warm, moist air to escape through an air-vent or open window.

Sometimes condensation is confused with damp. Condensation is surface moisture, whilst damp is moisture that has entered the fabric of the structure (e.g. rising damp or rainwater dripping from a leaking gutter onto a solid brick wall).

Advice for reducing condensation:

- Open windows or air vents.
- Try to keep all rooms a little warm, especially in cold weather.
- Keep bathroom and kitchen windows slightly open to let steam escape especially when cooking (use lids on saucepans), washing or bathing, but keep the doors shut to avoid moisture travelling around the rest of your home.

If you find patches of mould on walls, condensation may be the cause. If you are taking steps to minimise condensation but it still persists, contact your estate manager.

Floods – caused by wet weather

Floods are becoming more frequent in the UK, some parts of the borough may be more prone to flooding than others due to their location, such as properties at the bottom of a hill or near rivers. We all need to be prepared in case we live near flood areas, have a relative in the area or happen to be in these locations when they become flooded.

Here is some simple advice to prepare for a flood and what to do if there is a flood:

If you get a flood warning

- Move family members, pets, vehicles, valuables and other items to safety (if possible).
- Tell your neighbours, particularly older or disabled people.
- Put sandbags, flood boards or even towels in place, plug sinks/baths and put a sandbag in the toilet bowl to prevent backflow. But make sure your property is still ventilated to allow air flow.
- Be ready to turn off gas and electricity supplies, unplug electrical items and move them upstairs, if possible. You may need help to turn off supplies – so be prepared.

Water

During a flood

- You and your family's safety is a priority – do not put yourself at risk.
- Try to keep warm and dry and move upstairs, if possible, until help arrives.
- Do as much as you can in daylight, as once it gets dark it is much more difficult.
- Be prepared to evacuate your home/premises, please co-operate with emergency services and the council.
- Floods can kill, so do not try to walk or drive through floodwater. Six inches of fast flowing water can knock you over and two feet of water will float your car. High waters may release manhole covers so there may be other hazards you cannot see.
- Never try to swim through fast flowing water - you may get swept away or get hit by an object floating in the water.
- Avoid contact with floodwater - it may be contaminated with sewage.

Please remember, be prepared and safety comes first.

Who to contact:

If you get caught in a flood, you can call these emergency lines:

- Floodline on 0845 988 1188
- Emergency services on 999
- Wandsworth Emergency Control (WEC)
(020) 8871 7490

To find out if you live in a flood prone area, contact the Environment Agency or see the website www.environment-agency.gov.uk

For further information and advice about water, leaks and floods, tenants should contact their estate manager, leaseholders are advised to contact their water supplier and residents of RMOs should contact their local office.

Or you could contact the following organisation who has comprehensive information and advice:

- Thames Water
www.thameswater.co.uk
-

Asbestos

Asbestos

Many people have worries about asbestos, but undisturbed asbestos usually poses no problem.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous material which, if in good condition, presents negligible risk. When disturbed or damaged, however, asbestos-containing materials will release asbestos fibres and dust into the air, which are potentially dangerous.

In the past, asbestos was added to a variety of products to strengthen or fireproof them and used in the construction of some homes until the ban on asbestos came into force in November 1999. Most instances of asbestos in housing are low risk and unlikely to harm your health.

Undamaged asbestos in good condition will not release asbestos fibres. There is no danger unless the fibres are released and inhaled. If you suspect that there is damaged Asbestos Containing Material (ACM) in your home, contact your estate manager. Do not scrape, drill, cut, sand or disturb the area until checks have been carried out.

Under your lease agreement and tenancy conditions you are not permitted to change the structure or fabric of your home without prior consent from the council. This is to ensure work carried out is to the appropriate standard and to ensure proper controls are in place to reduce any possible exposure to asbestos fibres.

The council is required by law to hold a register of where asbestos is located in communal areas (e.g. landings, lobbies, stairwells etc). This does not extend to individual homes.

The government has provided best practice guidance that the council adheres to. The underlying principle embraced by the Health and Safety Executive is that it is always better not to remove or otherwise disturb an ACM, unless it is damaged or in the line of unavoidable work.

Tenants

You must not remove asbestos containing material. The council will decide whether removal is necessary by taking expert advice. If required, the council will employ a licensed contractor to remove and dispose of material or to encapsulate it (work to enclose or seal asbestos-containing materials).

Leaseholders

You must not remove asbestos containing material. If you suspect there is material in your property that contains asbestos you must employ the services of a licensed asbestos analyst/contractor to test and then encapsulate or remove and dispose of the material under controlled conditions. The only exception to this is if the asbestos is within the communal ducting which runs through your property. In this instance the council will inspect and take any necessary remedial action.

Who to contact

If you have any concerns about asbestos, tenants should contact their estate manager. Leaseholders should contact a licensed contractor and inform the council of the inspection or works if these are likely to affect neighbouring properties. Residents of RMOs should contact their local office.

To find out further information see the contacts section.

Home Safety

Window safety

If your home has windows above ground floor level, remember that they can present a safety hazard if left open, particularly to a small child. If there is a fault with your window, report it immediately and keep the window closed until the repair is completed.

Window restrictors

A restrictor mechanism is a safety device which is fitted to limit how far the window will open.

Some properties were built and designed before window safety restrictor mechanisms were introduced. Although, restrictors are not a statutory requirement, the council will, on request, fit window restrictors to those tenanted properties above the first floor that may not currently have them.

If your property has a safety restrictor mechanism fitted it is important that you ensure that it is in full working order. This safety mechanism must never be released other than to clean the outside of the window, after which it must be put back to its correct safety position. Tenants should contact their estate manager for further details.

You should report defects to your window safety mechanism immediately to your estate manager.

Leaseholders are advised to ensure they have window restrictors fitted, particularly if there are young or vulnerable people living in the property or if it is being sub-let.

Window locks

Some windows have safety locks fitted to prevent them from being opened, except when being cleaned.

You should ensure that windows, which open for cleaning purposes only and are fitted with locks that have a removable key, are kept locked at all times when cleaning is not in progress. These windows should not be opened for ventilation and the key should be kept securely out of reach of children.

Generally, the housing department does not fit window locks or supply replacement keys, except where the lock is an integral part of the window. You are advised to have a spare set of keys cut.

Security – door entry systems

The council has fitted entry call systems in some blocks for extra security. If your home has one, please:

- Keep the main door closed.
- Do not let anyone into the building that you do not know or who you are not expecting.
- Be aware of people trying to slip into the building behind you as you enter or leave.

Report any breakdown immediately (see the contacts section). Where the security of the whole block is affected a repair contractor must attend within 24 hours.

Security – looking after your own home

There are a range of safety measures you can use to protect yourself and your home:

- Check the identity of callers to your home. Council employees, representatives from the police, utility suppliers (gas, water and electric) and government officers all carry identification. Do not let anyone in your home if you have any suspicions and call the police.
- When you go out or go to sleep, make sure you close all windows and lock all doors.
- When you go away cancel milk, newspapers or anything else that you have delivered to your home.
- Fit a mortice lock and a safety chain to outside doors and remember to use them. If you live above the ground floor level you should not fit a lock that can only be opened from the inside with a key.
- Install a spy-hole in your door.
- Do not leave notes outside for callers or friends when you go out.
- Do not put keys under a mat outside your front door or keep them in a place accessible from an open letterbox.

Keep door keys safe as it is your responsibility to replace them if they get lost or stolen.

Home Safety

For further advice contact:

- The Metropolitan Police, Crime Reduction Officer at your local police station.
- The council's community safety service.
- Neighbourhood Watch - to join or form a scheme in your area contact (020) 8871 7696

Older, disabled or vulnerable tenants may be entitled to free security assessments free and works.

Protecting your belongings

You can put in place a few simple security steps to keep your belongings safe from would-be thieves.

- When you go out make sure you close and lock all windows and doors.
- Mark valuable property with your postcode using an ultra-violet marker pen.
- Take photocopies of personal documents, such as passports, drivers licence and bank accounts in case they are stolen. It will be easier to report, replace and track them down in the event of a burglary.
- Do not leave keys on tables by the front door. Thieves will steal keys through letterboxes.
- Install an intruder light and/or alarm, if possible.
- If you are going away for a few days, tell a friend or relative.

Insurance

You are advised to insure the contents of your home. The council is not responsible for the contents of your home. Insuring your belongings could save you a lot of money in the event of theft, loss or damage. You may also be responsible for damage caused to your neighbours' property, if it is deemed to be your fault.

There are many insurance companies that can tell you how much it will cost to insure the contents of your home. Always get quotations from several companies and choose the one that best fits your needs.

Do not be tempted to save money by under-insuring, it may cost you more in the long-run.

If you have anything stolen from your home report it to the police. Your insurance company will need a crime number to process a claim.

You can obtain further information from:

- British Insurance Brokers Association (BIBA)
0870 950 1790 www.biba.org.uk
- Institute of Insurance Brokers (IIB)
01933 410 003 www.iib-uk.com
- Association of British Insurers (ABI)
020 7600 3333 www.abi.org.uk

Leaseholders with building insurance claims should contact:

Enquiries and claims (020) 8871 6413/6414
insurancegroup@wandsworth.gov.uk

Bogus callers

Bogus callers may pose as council officers, water, electricity or gas workers and even police officers so they can get access to your home and steal money and belongings from your home. You can prevent this type of crime by taking a few precautions.

Follow the three step rules:

Stop – before you open the door.

Chain – put your door chain on.

Check – check through a spy hole, ask for their identification and check it carefully before letting anyone in.

When ringing to check a caller is valid, always look up their office/company telephone number yourself. Do not use a telephone number supplied by the caller, as bogus callers could have an accomplice answering the call.

If someone arrives unannounced, ask for an appointment at a convenient time. Officials will not mind being asked to do this. You can then arrange an appointment yourself.

Home Safety

If you are concerned ask a relative or friend to visit whilst the worker is in your home.

If you are approached by anyone suspicious or if you feel intimidated call the police and report it. Bogus callers are often not reported and the more information gathered about bogus callers, the easier it is for the police to apprehend them.

For further information contact the council's community safety service on (020) 8871 7696.

Protecting your identity

You may be taking some precautions to keep your identity safe. However, identity theft is a growing concern and has increased dramatically over recent years.

Keeping your identity safe:

- Shred all personal information before you throw them away: this includes bank statements, salary information or anything with a name and address.
- Set up a mail redirect if you move home.
- If you live in a shared house consider collecting debit cards or cheque books from your branch.
- Do not give your personal details to unknown callers or email companies (this is called phishing), or when you could be overheard.
- Try to avoid carrying your personal documents with you and keep them in a safe place in your home.
- Keep your bank/credit card and PIN number safe - remember a bank will never phone to ask for your PIN.
- Ensure a website is both secure and bona fide before registering and making online payments, there should be a golden padlock symbol and a web address beginning https.
- Delete suspicious emails without opening them.
- Have a good firewall on your computer and install all security updates offered by your computer software company.

Avoiding accidents - reducing trips and falls

Many accidents in the home are caused by trips and falls, by following a few simple steps you can reduce the risk to you and your family.

- Look around for anything that might cause an accident, e.g. slippery floors, trailing cables, toys or other objects on the floor or staircase.
- Wear suitable footwear.
- Make sure that worn carpets or loose mats are made secure to avoid them slipping.
- Keep walkways free and de-cluttered.
- Take care on sloping or uneven floor surfaces.
- Use handrails and/or walking aids, such as walking sticks, if required.
- Do not be tempted to carry large or heavy loads which will make it difficult to keep your balance or stop yourself falling.

For further information older people should contact Age UK who provide a range of advice and information.

You may also want to contact the council's WATCH lifeline service, which provides a pendant activated emergency alarm service for older, disabled and vulnerable clients. This service provides help if you fall, take ill or have an accident in your home. It is available to all residents in the borough.

WATCH lifeline (020) 8871 8198

Home Safety

Home emergency plan

You are advised to put in a place an emergency plan. This should include what to do and who to contact if there is an accident or incident and it should be individual to your household. Below are some hints and tips.

Escaping from your home

Work out an escape route if you need to exit your home during an emergency. You should think about:

- Who needs to escape, family/pets.
- Where family members are at different times of the day (day at work/school or home, night in bed/work). This will help if you have to think quickly during an emergency.
- Know where your keys are located.
- Keep hallways clear.

Make a list of people to contact during an incident or emergency. You could write these emergency contacts on a notice board or put them by the telephone. So if there is an accident or emergency you or family members, such as young children, know who to call.

This might include:

- Emergency services 999.
- Relatives, friends or neighbours.
- Plus other useful contacts such as your GP/doctor or NHS: 0845 46 47
- Utility companies (gas, electricity, water, telephone).
- Bank, passport office and DVLA (in case personal documents are lost or stolen).

Remember keep your mobile phone charged as it may be useful during an emergency.

Get to know your home

You should know where rooms and services are located. Know the easiest route to and from each room and where your fuse box or circuit breaker, water stopcocks and gas supply meter are located, for example, water stopcock in hallway cupboard. Knowing these instantly helps during an emergency, especially if you need to tell a firefighter where a room is located.

Keep documents safe

You are advised to keep personal documents such as passports, bank books, birth certificates and drivers' licences in a secure place. You should also photocopy these and store the copies in a different place (preferably a metal fire retardant box). Keep contact numbers for each organisation in case you need to report them lost or stolen. If you cannot photocopy them, write down the any reference numbers.

Test your plan

Finally, if you put in place an emergency plan, go through it with family members, check contact details and test it, so that you are all aware of:

- When to seek assistance.
- Who to contact.
- What to do.

Contacts

Emergency services

If an incident is of a serious or criminal nature call the Emergency Services on **999** (ask for an ambulance, the fire service or police).

Housing emergency contacts

WEC (24-hour) emergency line (020) 8871 7490
email: hms@wandsworth.gov.uk

For properties managed by the council or out of hours emergencies.

Council switchboard (020) 8871 6000
or visit the council website www.wandsworth.gov.uk

Housing area teams

Central team (020) 8871 5333

Eastern team (020) 8871 7439

Southern team (020) 8871 7482

Western team (020) 8871 5530

or email: hms@wandsworth.gov.uk

Housing and Community Services
Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

If you do not know your area team or estate manager contact: (020) 8871 6864 or (020) 8871 8247.

Emergency repairs

Contact your estate manager in your area team. If the incident is out of hours contact WEC.

If you have a general repair you can either contact your estate manager or you can report a repair and track its progress online at:

www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housingonline

WATCH Lifeline service

The emergency alarm response service for vulnerable, older and disabled residents in the borough.

WATCH Lifeline – emergencies (24 hours)
(020) 8871 7741
watch@wandsworth.gov.uk

WATCH Lifeline (enquiries) (020) 8871 8198
wardenservices@wandsworth.gov.uk

Emergency warden services (24 hours) sheltered tenants and vulnerable residents (020) 8871 7741

Other council services

Environmental services division (020) 8871 6127
esd@wandsworth.gov.uk

Estate services (general) (020) 8871 7446
Repairs (communal areas)
hms@wandsworth.gov.uk

Home improvement agency (020) 8871 6940
grants (private properties) (020) 8871 6171
hia@wandsworth.gov.uk

Housing – insurance enquiries and claims
(020) 8871 6413
insurancegroup@wandsworth.gov.uk
Leaseholder enquiries (020) 8871 7804
propertyaccts@wandsworth.gov.uk

Lift defects (020) 8871 7042
hms@wandsworth.gov.uk

Communal heating/hot water - repairs
0800 977 8473
hms@wandsworth.gov.uk

Individual heating/hot water repairs
0800 977 8472
hms@wandsworth.gov.uk

Gas maintenance contractor
Smith and Byford (020) 8652 7014

Door entry system defects (020) 8871 8673 or 8674
hms@wandsworth.gov.uk

Safety and security

Community safety (general enquiries)
(020) 8871 6254
communitysafety@wandsworth.gov.uk

Anti-social behaviour (020) 8871 8895
asb@wandsworth.gov.uk

Neighbourhood watch
(020) 8871 6254

Contacts

One safe scheme (020) 8871 6950
advice for victims of first-time burglary

Security grants (020) 8871 7696

Wandsafe burglary aftercare service
(020) 8871 6950

Resident Management Organisations and Co-operatives

Ackroydon East TMO (020) 8785 7573
info.aetmo@btconnect.com

All Saints Co-op (020) 7801 9842
office@allsaintscourt.org

Battersea Fields RMO (020) 7622 7499
office@batterseafields.co.uk

Carey Gardens Co-op (020) 7498 3664
housing@careygardens.co.uk

Chatham Court Co-op (020) 7223 8998
sandron602002@yahoo.co.uk

Convent Co-op (020) 8874 6856
convent25@aol.com

Felsham Road Co-op (020) 8788 0572
office@felshamroad.org

Goulden House Co-op (020) 7924 5213
office@gouldenhouse.org

McCarthy Court Co-op (020) 7228 2894
office@mccarthycourt.org

Patmore Co-op (020) 7622 4495
team@patmorecoop.org.uk

Totteridge House Co-op (020) 7738 2358
office@totteridgehouse.org

Wimbledon Park Co-op (020) 8780 9980
office@wimbledonpark.org

Local police and fire services

Emergency 999
Non-emergency 101

Local police

There are five local police stations in Wandsworth borough based in Battersea, Wandsworth, Lavender Hill, Tooting and Putney. If you wish to contact the police and it is not an emergency call:

Non-emergency 101
Textphone 18001101

Or see the Wandsworth Metropolitan Police website:
<http://content.met.police.uk/Borough/Wandsworth>

Crimestoppers 0800 555 111.

Victim Support Wandsworth (020) 7223 1234.

Fire

Emergency (only) 999

Fire safety advice

The council fits free smoke alarms for tenants.
For further information contact your area team.

If you are concerned that your home may be at risk of fire your local fire service can give you advice and fit a free smoke alarm. Contact Home Fire Safety Centre
08000 28 44 28
www.london-fire.gov.uk

Contacts

Other useful contacts

Gas and electricity

Emergency contact numbers:

National Grid Gas Emergency

(free phone) 0800 111 999

Alternatively for general advice, consumer information about electricity suppliers or to find a gas or electricity supplier, contact:

Citizens' Advice Bureau

(formerly Consumer Direct Service) 08454 04 05 06

Home heat helpline 0800 33 66 99

who will put you directly in touch with the Priority Service Register team for your gas and electricity supplier.

Electricity NICEIC

To find a registered electrician see www.niceic.com

Water

Consumer council for water (offer advice and information to consumers about water services and suppliers).

General enquiries: (020) 7931 8502

Textphone: (020) 1345 1044

email: londonandsoutheast@ccwater.org.uk

www.ccwater.org.uk

Water companies

Thames Water 0845 9200 800

Textphone 0845 7200 899

www.thameswater.co.uk

For other water operators contact

(020) 7344 1844

www.water.org.uk

Water UK Head Office

1 Queen Anne's Gate

London SW1H 9BT

Floods

Contact the Environment Agency

Floodline (information on flood warnings)

0845 988 1188

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Asbestos

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos

Incident Contact Centre

0845 300 9923

Wandsworth Environmental Services Division

(020) 8871 6127

Insurance (non council)

Association of British Insurers

(020) 7600 3333

51 Gresham Street

London EC2V 7HQ

info@abi.org.uk

www.abi.org.uk

British Insurance Brokers Association

0870 950 1790

8th Floor, John Stow House

18 Bevis Marks,

London EC3A 7JB.

enquiries@biba.org.uk

www.biba.org.uk

Institute of Insurance Brokers (IIB)

01933 410 003

www.iib-uk.com

Higham Business Centre,

Midland Road, Higham Ferrars NN10 8DW

Advice, grants and financial assistance

A range of grants are available to make your home more safe and secure. Please contact the individual agency to find out if you are eligible and for further information.

Cold weather payment - for households on low income. Contact your nearest Pension Centre or Job Centre Plus.

Warm front scheme - financial assistance to help pay for heating and insulation improvements. Generally for household on low income or disability related benefit. Freephone: 0800 316 2805

Winter fuel payments - this is an annual payment to help older people with their heating bills.

08459 15 15 15

Textphone: 0845 601 5613

Smoke Free England

Provides information about the law relating to smoking in public places and workplaces. It also offers free advice to those that work to stop smoking.

Smoke free compliance line 0800 587 1667
or contact Wandsworth Council about smoke free compliance.

NHS Stop smoking service 0800 022 4332
www.smokefree.nhs.uk

Age UK (Wandsworth branch)

Offers a range of information and advice about home safety, security, grants and financial assistance available to older people.

Local branch:
549 Old York Road
Wandsworth SW18 1TQ
Telephone: 020 8877 8940
Or see the website: www.ageuk.org.uk/wandsworth
email: info@agewandsworth.org.uk

NHS Direct

0845 46 47
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Identity and Passport Service

0300 222 0000
Textphone 0300 222 0222
www.ips.gov.uk/passport/contact

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

0300 790 6801
www.dft.gov.uk/dvla

