

Let's talk about...

# FIRE SAFETY IN HIGH RISE BLOCKS

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**Chester  
& District  
Housing  
Trust**

This Leaflet is intended for people who live in our high rise blocks: Thackeray Towers, Rowland Heights, Haygarth Heights, Plas Dinas, Glyn Garth, Nant Peris, St. Annes, St. Oswalds, St. Georges

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## JUST IN CASE, PLAN YOUR ESCAPE

You don't have to be an expert, just think it through. How would you get out at night? For instance, keep a torch handy. How would you get guests out? Tell them where the door key is. **Keep escape routes clear.**

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## IF THERE'S A FIRE IN YOUR FLAT

- Try to keep calm. Shout to let everyone in the flat know
- Then **get out and stay out.** Don't stop for valuables. Your life's more important
- Don't go looking for the fire. Don't open doors if they're warm to touch
- If there's **lots of smoke, crawl on the floor.** The air is clearer there
- Close your flat door on your way out to stop the fire spreading
- Alert as many of your landing neighbours as you can
- **Phone the Fire Service** by dialling 999. It's free from any phone (you don't need credit on your mobile to call)

- Tell them your address. Tell them that it is a high rise building and which floor the fire is on
- Make your way to the building entrance to direct the Fire Service. **Use the stairs, do not use the lift.**
- Tell other people coming to the building of the fire, that the Fire Service is on its way. Advise them not to enter
- If you leave the building, do not leave the area. Make yourself known to fire officers so that they know you are safe

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## NEVER JUMP FROM A HIGH RISE. EVER

If your mobility is impaired and your flat is on fire, evacuate your flat but do not use the lift to escape the building. Go to the staircase and wait for the Fire Service. You will be protected by another fire resistant door on the staircase and firefighters will rescue you. Do not attempt to walk down the stairs if you are likely to fall.

Do not try and evacuate the whole building.

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## WHAT IF I CAN'T GET OUT BECAUSE THE FIRE IS BLOCKING MY ESCAPE?

- Plan to make one room your “safe room” in case you can’t escape
- It’s best if it’s a room with a window and a phone
- Put cushions and bedding round the bottom of the door to block smoke
- If you have water, wet the door if it becomes hot
- Open the window and wave a sheet to let fire-fighters know you are there

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## HOW SAFE IS MY HIGH RISE BLOCK?

This document sets out to explain the key safety features of your high rise block, what the Trust does to maintain the block and what you can do to keep you and your neighbours safer.

**Please rest assured that high-rise flats are built to be fireproof. Fires rarely happen and when they do, rarely spread further than one or two rooms.**

There is a one hour fire barrier between floors and a half hour barrier between walls of each flat. Your flat is fitted with half hour fire resistant doors. These barriers are there to provide enough time for the fire service to come and put out any fire before it spreads to the next flat.

In this way a fire on one floor will have little effect on people living on another floor, consequently the buildings are not designed for mass evacuation. This means that the staircase is not designed for every resident to escape at once and there is no requirement for smoke detectors and alarms in the communal landings and lobbies.

In effect this makes it easier for the Fire Service to respond to fires as there are less people coming down the stairs as they try to go up. This lack of mass evacuation is known as a “Stay Put Policy”.

However, if you are affected by heat or smoke it is crucial that you leave the safety of your flat, or if you are told to leave by fire-fighters or the police.

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## THE DO'S & DON'TS OF HIGH RISE LIVING

- Your safety depends on your neighbours and they rely on you
- Always be aware of the smaller issues that affect your safety

**Don't** store gas cylinders, paraffin or other highly flammable liquids in your flat or shed.

**Don't** park so you block access to high rise flats. Access roads are designed so that fire appliances can get as close as possible to fight fires.

**Do** keep fire doors closed. They help to slow down the spread of fire and will give you extra time to get out.

**Don't** wedge doors open. Remove wedges if you find them.

**Do** keep your landing free of combustible materials and rubbish at all times.

## GOOD NEIGHBOURS USE THE REFUSE CHUTE BETWEEN 8AM AND 8PM

**Don't** leave objects on the landings that could obstruct or impede escape.

**Don't** let in people you don't know. Only let people in that buzz for you, if they are going to another flat let them buzz that one.

**Do** make sure cigarettes are put out properly.

**Don't** smoke on the landings and lifts – it's the law.

**Do** take care with candles and tea lights.

**Don't** place them on or near materials that could burn or catch fire – like curtains.

**Do** place rubbish in small bags when using the refuse chute. A blocked chute can back up quickly and become a fire hazard.

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## GAS SAFETY

If your flat has a gas supply, by law the Trust must carry out gas safety checks every 10 months to make sure all gas appliances, fittings and flues provided for your use are safe. We will contact you when your gas safety check is due. Further information on the checks are given in the Trust's leaflet No. 17 "Gas Safety in your home".

### **Please note this important information for high rise flat tenants regarding gas cookers:**

From 1st January 2008 new regulations from the Institution of Gas Engineers & Managers (IGEM) stated that all new gas cooking appliances installed in flats or high rises will be required to have a flame supervision device (FSD).

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## WHAT IS A FLAME SUPERVISION DEVICE?

A Flame Supervision Device (or FSD) is a part of the gas burner system that ensures that the fuel supply to a gas appliance such as a gas hob is cut off automatically and immediately, if for any reason the flame goes out or becomes unstable.

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## DO I NEED TO CHANGE MY CURRENT APPLIANCE?

No – but if you do decide to change it, the new device will need to have a FSD fitted.

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## WHERE CAN I BUY APPLIANCES WITH FSD?

All the normal retailers such as Comet, Dixon, Currys etc. You will need to let the sales person know that you need an FSD appliance and they will advise you on suitable products. Remember that a registered engineer will only install a gas cooking appliance in a flat (multi-user dwelling) if the product has a Flame Supervision Device (FSD) fitted. Never use a non-registered engineer to do any work on your gas appliances. **Incompetence kills.**

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## ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Don't overload sockets, keep to one plug per socket. Fit correct fuses to all appliances to prevent them being overloaded.

Don't use heaters for drying clothes and keep them a safe distance from combustible material to avoid them catching fire.

If you are concerned about the electrics in your flat call the Trust. For example, if you notice burn marks around plugs or cables.

If the flex on an appliance becomes frayed, stop using it and get it replaced or repaired by a qualified electrician.

## FIRE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

Every flat must have at least one smoke alarm installed. You may have one of three types of alarm:

1. A mains powered smoke alarm, that has a continuously charging battery back-up in case of power failure.
2. A mains powered smoke alarm with replaceable battery back-up. The alarm will bleep when the battery needs changing. It is your responsibility to replace the battery, however if you have difficulty changing the battery let the Trust know and we will arrange to change it for you.
3. A battery powered smoke alarm. If you have this type of alarm please get in touch, we will replace it for free to a mains powered unit.

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## WHAT IF I CAN'T HEAR THE ALARM?

Please contact Customer Services. We can provide you with alternative alarms that will alert you of the danger.

To test your alarm, hold down the test button until the alarm sounds. If there is more than one alarm fitted, then you should test all. If the alarm does not sound call the **Customer Services Team** on **0808 100 7701**.

Care should be taken when using toasters, plug-in air fresheners, deodorant sprays in the vicinity of the smoke alarms as they may trigger the alarm. If decorating, then the smoke alarms should be covered to prevent dust getting into the detector head. Also it is recommended that they should be cleaned once a month, usually using a vacuum hose.

## OTHER SAFETY FEATURES

The dry riser is an empty pipe that runs from the ground to the top floor with an outlet on each landing. In the event of a fire, the Fire Service connect to the mains water at ground level and pump the water to the floor where the fire is.

If you see a fire door, dry riser, bin chute, or other safety feature damaged or vandalised, report it immediately to **Customer Services** on **0808 100 7701**.

**Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service** carried out more than 60,000 Home Safety Assessments last year alone. You can request a free visit by visiting **[www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/publicsafety](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/publicsafety)** or calling **0800 389 0053**. You can also book one by texting HSA with your name and address to **07624 808300**.

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## IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE, PLEASE CONTACT US:

### Online

Web: [www.cdht.org](http://www.cdht.org)  
Email: [info@cdht.org](mailto:info@cdht.org)

### By phone

Freephone: 0808 100 7701

### Lines open

Monday to Thursday  
8am—6pm  
Friday 8am—5pm

Fax: 01244 305690

Minicom: 01244 305500

## BY VISITING US AT:

### Chester —

**Registered Office**  
Centurion House  
77 Northgate Street  
Chester, CH1 2HQ.  
Monday to Friday  
9am—4.45pm

### Lache —

**Neighbourhood Office**  
89a Cliveden Road  
Lache, CH4 8DT.  
Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri  
9am—12pm

### Blacon —

**Neighbourhood Office**  
17—18 The Parade  
Blacon, CH1 5HW.  
Monday to Friday  
1.30pm—4.30pm

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## RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

We know it makes sense to involve our residents to help improve housing services. Here at the Trust we take every opportunity to give residents **a say!**

Interested? Find out how your views can make a change to the way we do things by contacting the Resident Involvement Team on Freephone 0808 100 7701.

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### Also available in

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