



Safety Compliance

Housing Scrutiny Commission : 4th. November 2019

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Cutkelvin

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: potentially all
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1. Summary

The Housing Division has a duty to keep its tenants, leaseholders, staff and contractors safe. This report has been prepared to advise members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission how the Housing Division manage the risks associated to water hygiene, fire safety and asbestos.

2 Supporting information including options considered:

The Housing Division has developed a range of policy documents to ensure that risks are identified, managed effectively and that everybody knows what their roles and responsibilities are.

These policy documents have been written to take into account the legal requirements of each area and recognised good practise. The following is a summary of the respective policy:

Water Hygiene

We have the policy to ensure that any water system that may present a risk of legionella bacteria exposure to our tenants, staff and members of the public are designed and maintained to control any risk.

There is a lot of legislation that we have to comply with to ensure we are doing this correctly, some are listed below:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999
- HSE (L* 4th. Edition) 2013 Prevention and control of Legionellosis (including Legionaries' disease) HSE approved code of practise L* (ACopL8)

The risk is caused by water systems that create and disperse water droplets that may be inhaled such as:

- hot and cold-water systems
- showers
- spray taps
- jet washers

- air conditioning and ventilation systems

What do we do to manage the risks:

Risk assessments are carried out for all buildings with water systems that are considered to present a reasonable risk of exposure to legionella bacteria. The risk assessment is reviewed periodically and if the water system is changed, the building use is changed, new information becomes available or even at the building users discretion/request.

The risk assessment may identify a range of measures that need to happen to make sure any risk is managed. The risk assessment may also identify works required to reduce the risk, if it does these will be carried out.

Some of the more common works we carry out to ensure that we are safe are:

- Carry out sample checks to ensure water temperatures are being maintained
- Ensure monthly flushing regimes are maintained (water storage tanks)
- Routine shower head cleaning (void properties, sheltered accommodation, hostels)
- All work on our water systems is carried out by approved contractors
- That we identify any unacceptable situations and put them right
- Provide advice, guidance and training to staff

All housing staff have a responsibility to ensure continued compliance, from our teams in tenancy management, repairs and void staff but the responsibility sites in Technical Services.

Resources:

We have a budget of £250k per year, the work is carried out by up to 9 contractors split into 3 main work areas:

- Risk assessments and testing
- Remedial repairs and upgrades
- Air conditioning systems and ventilation serving maintenance and installation.

Fire Safety

The primary purpose of the fire safety policy is to ensure that we prevent a fire from happening and secondly that in the event of a fire we keep our tenants and leaseholders safe. The policy is designed to make it clear what people's roles and responsibilities are:

There are lots of legislation that we have to work this depends on the type of building, and we work very closely with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

The overarching document is the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 but there are also good practice guides for certain types of accommodation that supplement this.

We carry out risk assessments on all our blocks of flats (communal areas) at least every 3 years and sooner depending on the block type.

Some of the legislation/guidance documents are:

- Building Regulation Approved Document B
- Fire Risk Assessments Sleeping Accommodation
- Fire Safety in Specialist Housing Guide (Sheltered Housing)
- LGG Fire Safety in purpose-built flats
- LACoRS Fire Safety in certain types of existing buildings
- British Standard (BS) and European Standards (ES)

We split our accommodation into four distinct areas:

- High rise blocks
- Purpose built flats
- Flats in converted properties
- Sheltered Accommodation/Hostels

There are obvious similarities across the four areas but the reason we have separate approaches is because the risks are different

High Rise blocks.

The risk is higher because of the increase number of flats and the height of the building. The inspection regime of a high-rise block is more intensive, we inspect all floors weekly, we have to carry out alarm testing and ensure any remote monitoring systems are operational. We have now started installing sprinkler systems in our blocks and we need to ensure that the servicing regime is maintained, and they are fully operational at all times.

Purpose built flats

The situation in purpose-built flats is similar, the risks are lower because the blocks are smaller and lower level, so the regime is reduced, the frequency of inspection may be every 4 weeks and a block may not necessarily have an alarm system fitted, these decisions are made on a block by block basis and based on the fire risk assessment for the block.

Flats in converted properties.

There is sometimes a higher risk in blocks of flats that have been converted because the building is not being used as originally intended. Some of these flats may have been converted many years ago and whilst they were converted to the standards in

force at the time of construction techniques and opinions have moved on. The biggest are of concern is the quality of compartmentation, this is why we have a full evacuation policy and not a stay put policy.

Sheltered Accommodation/Hostels

This type of accommodation we called specialist, and as such we have enhanced levels of inspections and monitoring.

The stay put policy and compartmentation.

Why do we have a stay put policy ?

A stay put policy is designed to stop residents in flats unaffected by fire from unnecessarily evacuating the building and blocking the stairways, this makes it easier for the Fire Service to quickly extinguish a fire

What is Compartmentation?

Compartmentation is the use construction techniques to divide the building into a series of fire tight boxes called compartments

What does Compartmentation do

Compartmentation slows fire spread within the building by reducing the fuel available in the initial stages of a fire.

It also forms a barrier to the products of combustion; including smoke, heat and toxic gases.

Why is Compartmentation needed

Compartmentation should help the occupants to evacuate the building and assist fire and rescue service personnel with fire-fighting and rescue operations.

Compartmentation is critical to a stay put policy.

Passive fire protection

The role of Passive Fire Protection is to limit the spread of fire through Structural Fire protection and Fire compartmentation.

Each flat is constructed to form a fire resisting box, each separated from the rest of the building.

- Where services such as pipes, ducts or cables pass through walls, floors or ceilings, there should be no gaps to allow the passage of smoke or flames.
- The door to each flat should be a self-closing fire resisting door.
- This allows a stay put policy to be in place
- There is no requirement to provide a fire alarm system in the common parts
- Smoke alarms should be provided to each flat
- Emergency lighting should be provided to the common parts
- Firefighting equipment is not usually required in the common parts

Resources:

We have budget of £1m for 2019/20 to carry out fire improvement work, the works are delivered by 7 contractors, the main areas of work are:

- Fire doors and fire stopping
- Fire risk assessments
- Compartmentation surveys
- Fire alarm and emergency lighting maintenance
- Alarm signalling
- Sprinkler installation
- Misting system installation
- Dry riser maintenance

Asbestos.

Asbestos is a mineral that is resistant to heat, fire and corrosive chemicals and was used extensively in the construction industry until 1985. (amosite and crocidolite banned in 1985, Chrysotile banned in 1999) it is made up of small fibres that are hazardous and primarily cause harm to the linings of the lungs when inhaled, any subsequent disease can take from 15 – 60 years to show from being first exposed.

There are three main types of asbestos:

- Chrysotile (white)
- Amosite (brown)
- Crocidolite (blue)

What do we do to manage the risk ?

- In the first instance we work to the 'Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012'. Which has shaped our policy.
- We ensure that the asbestos policy complies with and reflects the legal framework and good practise.
- We make sure our policy is implemented by working with leaseholders, stakeholders and other council departments
- We implement processes equally across the Division
- We support staff by providing training for anybody likely to have exposure to asbestos and practical training for any staff liable to work on asbestos containing materials.
- We communicate with tenants and leaseholders in plain English when dealing with asbestos related enquiries.

What does this mean in practise:

We manage asbestos, we do not automatically remove it, if it's in good condition, we monitor it, if's its damaged or likely to deteriote then we remove it.

Areas in a house that you may find asbestos are:

- Decorative coatings on ceilings
- Bath panels
- Thermoplastic floor tiles
- Pipe boxings
- Wardrobe linings
- Water tanks in lofts

We deal with asbestos depending on the risk, typically cement bonded products can be removed by council operatives, under controlled conditions, but non-cement bonded products have to be removed by licenced contractors under fully controlled conditions. (this is because they are more friable and the risk of a release of fibres is greater)

For all of our properties we hold asbestos information, this is stored on our Housing System and every time a job is sent to the operative they receive the asbestos information associated to the property. This is so they are aware of its location before they enter the property and any actions they need to take.

We also provide this information to our contractors and it is available to anybody that needs to see it.

We also ensure all our operatives receive annual asbestos awareness training to ensure their level of knowledge and awareness is maintained, we also make this mandatory for our contractors. There may be times when asbestos is hidden, and this could be exposed if we are carrying out a repair or a refurbishment, the operatives need to know what to do in every potential situation.

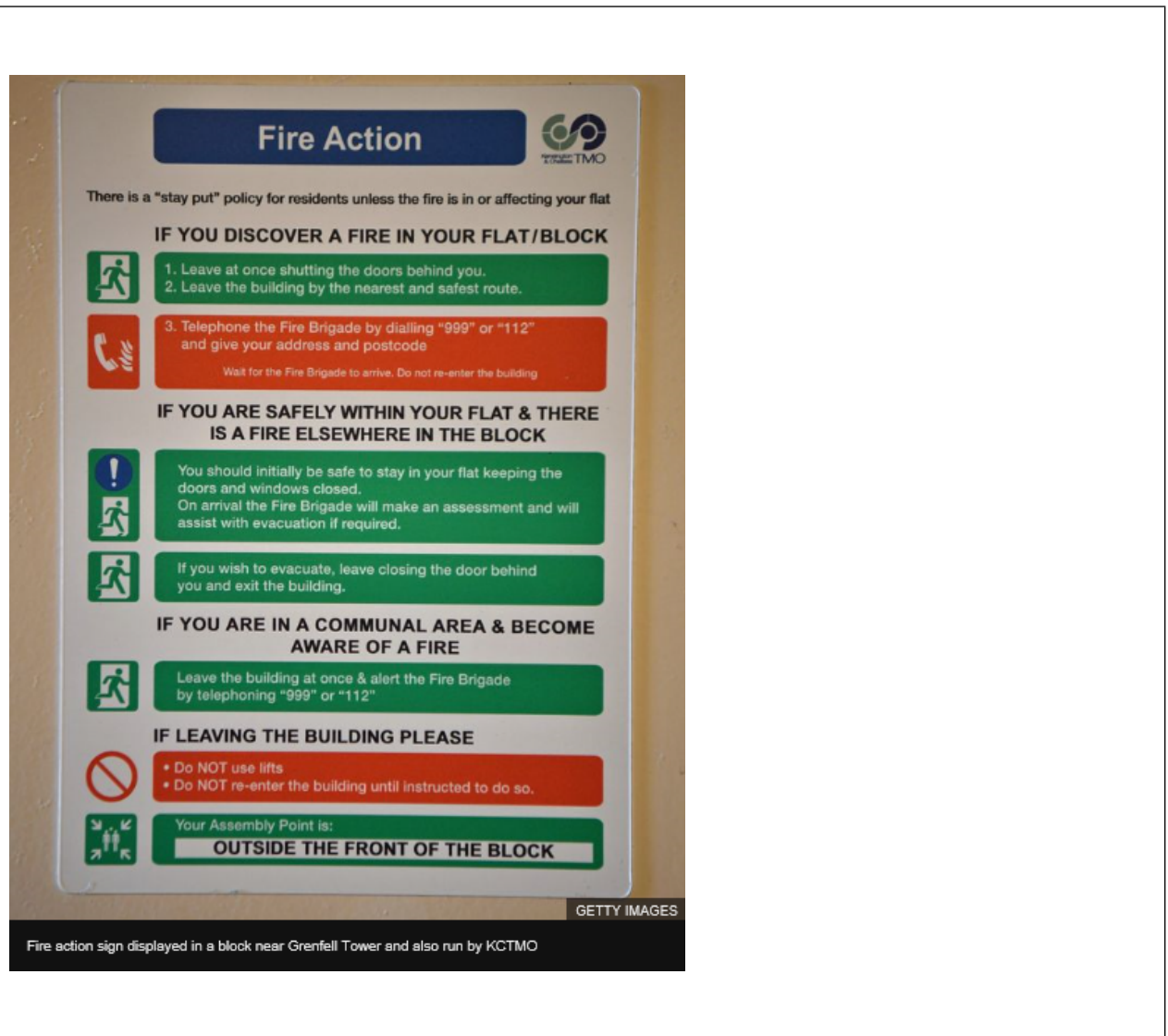
We also need to make sure we dispose of any asbestos containing material correctly, we do this in house, and collect all asbestos containing waste, we are licenced carries, and make sure it is disposed of correctly.

As part of some recent refurbishments, we have taken the decision that we will remove all asbestos containing materials, we have done this at Maxfield and Gordon House and we will continue to adopt this approach on a project by project basis, working alongside our managed approach.

Resources:

We have a dedicated Asbestos Coordinator who ensures that all work we do, whether by our in-house teams or contractors is compliant, he is supported by 4 Asbestos Technicians who are all qualified to take asbestos samples and surveys. (an asbestos surveys is carried out in advance of any programmed work being carried out)

We have an asbestos removal budget of £560k and a staffing budget of £215k. all licenced removal area carried out by contractors, we have 3 contractors.



4. Details of Scrutiny

Report for HSC information

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

Report for information only

5.2 Legal implications

Report for information only

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

Report for information only

5.4 Equalities Implications

Report for information