

**Tower  
Hamlets  
Homes**

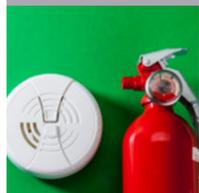
**opendoor**



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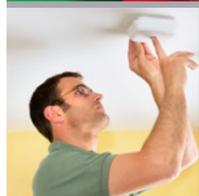


**Fire information  
and guidance**



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### Tower Hamlets Homes

SUMMER 2017

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I understand that many residents living in our high-rise blocks will be concerned about fire and I want to reassure you that Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) has a programme of works in place to improve the safety of our blocks.

Following the Grenfell Tower fire THH immediately initiated extra property inspections. These included extra checks of exterior cladding and an overall review of fire safety. THH increased caretaking services to make sure that obstructions and flammable materials in shared areas are quickly removed.

In 2016, THH started a fire safety programme that has already ensured that all properties have full and current fire risk assessment. The Council has allocated £6 million for the next three years solely for fire safety work.

THH works closely with the Council and the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and they meet regularly, including jointly inspecting properties and managing any risks.

The Council believes in social housing and we invest in it. We are determined to continue to ensure that our existing housing and our new developments have the very highest possible safety standards.

The Council, THH and the LFB are doing everything they can to keep residents safe from the devastating consequences of a major fire, but you can help too by following the advice in this special edition of opendoor.

John Biggs  
Executive Mayor Tower Hamlets



Grenfell Tower was without doubt the most challenging fire I've ever attended in my career with London Fire Brigade (LFB). It was a night I will never forget and one I hope never to see again. My thoughts remain with everyone affected by this tragic incident.

Following a fire on such an unprecedented scale, it's understandable that people who live in high-rises have questions about their safety. So I'm pleased that Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) has put this fire safety information together in one publication that will reach all residents. We work closely with the Council and THH on fire safety but it is vital that residents play their part too.

Thankfully, fires are rare but the information provided will help you know what to do if one should happen and I would urge everyone to read it.

Patrick Goulbourne  
Tower Hamlets Borough Commander

# What we are doing to keep you safe

It is a worrying time following recent fires and we want to assure you that THH takes the safety of residents very seriously.

## Assessing the risk of fire

Regulations require us to assess blocks for fire risks by carrying out a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA).

We improved fire safety under the recent decent homes programme including:

- Providing hard-wired smoke alarms in around 10,000 properties; and
- Installing a large number of fire-resistant front doors. These also provide additional resistance to break-ins.

But we are continually improving safety by programming work as new issues are raised by our independent, professionally accredited FRA assessors. The latest round of FRAs have shown more works are required, which we are scheduling in priority order.

Works include:

- More new or upgraded flat front doors;
- Upgrading fire doors in corridors and
- Improving the fire and smoke resistance of electrical intake panels.

FRAs will be reviewed after works are completed. The Mayor has given an undertaking that all of the FRAs will be published and we are working on this. They are lengthy and detailed, with a lot of technical jargon and some confidential personal information that has to be removed; so we need to do some work to make them easier to understand. We will be publishing the FRAs starting with the tallest blocks first, so check [thh.org.uk](http://thh.org.uk) in the coming weeks for your FRA.

## Cladding

None of the buildings owned by the Council that THH manages has the same type of cladding as Grenfell Tower. We have generally, but not always, used a mineral fibre insulation which is fire-proof and has been rigorously tested before being installed. We are busy testing some other older types of insulating materials used in a small number of properties and we are keeping tenants and residents associations informed while this checking is carried out.



## Stay put



**W**e back LFB's guidance to 'Stay Put' in purpose-built flats, unless your flat is being affected by fire or smoke. This advice is based on the fire protection provided in the building and the walls and doors of each flat.

This has been the case for many decades and, although fires in flats unfortunately occur throughout the country every day, the fire usually only affects the flat on fire.

However, some smoke may enter corridors when the residents leave the flat on fire, or when firefighters enter the flat to extinguish the fire. 'Staying put' will reduce the risk of you entering a smoky corridor unnecessarily and potentially being overcome by smoke. It will also allow firefighters to tackle the fire safely and quickly without being delayed by many residents evacuating down the stairways.

LFB do, however, ask that all residents think about their escape plan in the rare event that a fire breaks out in their own home. LFB have published some guidance and videos on this at [london-fire.gov.uk](http://london-fire.gov.uk).

We have increased the concierge cover and patrols to some high-rise blocks – adding extra refuse collections, and being more visible on estates. A weekend caretaking service has also been introduced for the time being.

We have also attended many residents meetings and held drop-in sessions to discuss any questions and anxieties residents have on fire safety. We have been joined at these meetings by representatives of the LFB, which has been really helpful in answering residents' questions and allaying fears.

## Residents have a part to play

We also need residents to play their part, so please follow the guidelines in this booklet so everyone can remain as safe as possible.

We have put lots of information on our website [thh.org.uk](http://thh.org.uk) with links to some helpful advice and animations by the LFB. Our staff have also been briefed on answers to the frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding fire safety, so if you have any questions, visit [thh.org.uk](http://thh.org.uk) first.

If you can't find the answer, please contact our Housing Service Centre on **020 7364 5015** or [contactus@thh.org.uk](mailto:contactus@thh.org.uk).

# Help keep you and your neighbours safe

## Your responsibilities as tenants and leaseholders

### Door grilles

Security grilles can stop you leaving quickly and slow down the fire brigade. They will only be permitted in limited circumstances. You should be able to open grilles from the inside without a key. If not, does everyone in your home know what to do and where the keys are if they need to escape?

Tenants with new front doors do not need to consider a front door grille as these doors are secure. We plan to replace all older front doors.

Where there are existing grilles across front doors, they must:

- Not be fixed to the front door frame; and
- Not obstruct the walkway. For example, the grille must lie flat against the wall when it is open.

balconies and walkways for end flats if they only affect one property. The space behind should not be used for storage. If there is an additional grille across the flat's front door, this must be removed. In all cases you must seek approval from your Housing Officer.

### Corridors and walkways

Avoid obstructions in corridors and on open walkways above ground floor:

- Bicycles, washing lines, plastic storage sheds and anything that causes an obstruction are not allowed.
- Plant pots and planters should take up no more than one fifth of the width of a walkway or ground floor path.
- Make sure that items placed in the corridor and on window sills are made of things that do not burn, such as metal or

porcelain. They should not cause an obstruction.

- Portable chairs are fine, but please don't use permanent or heavy furniture.

- Window boxes are allowed if they do not obstruct the walkway or are unsteady.
- Hanging baskets are fine if they are only fixed to the inside wall.

This advice will help to protect you and your family from the risk of fire.

### If you are a leaseholder, you must:

- Make sure the electrical system is safe, for example sockets and light fittings;
- Make sure that all appliances are safe, for example cookers and kettles;
- Follow safety regulations;
- Provide a smoke alarm on each floor;
- Make sure you have fire doors on the entrance and kitchen; and
- Not carry out any alterations to your home without consent. This includes changing your front door.

### If you are a leaseholder who rents out a flat, you must:

- Comply with the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations to ensure that your property is fitted with a working

carbon monoxide detector and a working fire alarm on every habitable floor of the property.

You must ensure that you have undertaken a gas safety inspection of any gas appliances fitted and provided a copy of this to your tenant.

### Advice for high-rise and purpose-built flats

For people living in a high-rise or purpose-built flat, this the Fire Brigade's advice:

- If the fire is actually inside your flat or maisonette, leave immediately and call 999.
- If there is a fire or smoke inside your flat or maisonette and your escape route is NOT clear, it may be safer to stay in your flat or maisonette until the fire brigade arrives.
- Find a safe room, close the door and use soft materials to block any gaps to stop the smoke. Go to a window, shout "HELP, FIRE" and call 999.
- If there is a fire in another part of your building while you are inside your purpose-built flat or maisonette, and you're not affected by the fire, stay put and call 999.
- You are usually safer staying put in your own flat or maisonette unless heat or smoke is affecting you.

There is more detailed advice at [london-fire.gov.uk](http://london-fire.gov.uk).



No grilles are permitted across enclosed shared walkways. They stop people escaping fires so they will be removed – although we will normally allow grilles on

# Preventing common fires

## Fire safety around the home



### IN THE KITCHEN COOK SAFELY

- Take extra care if you need to leave the kitchen while cooking; take pans off the heat or turn them down.
- Avoid leaving children in the kitchen alone when cooking on the hob. Keep matches and saucepan handles out of their reach.
- Make sure saucepan handles don't stick out – so they don't get knocked off the stove.
- Take care if you're wearing loose clothing – it can easily catch fire.
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob.
- Spark devices are safer than matches or lighters to light gas cookers, because they don't have a naked flame.
- Double check the cooker is off when you've finished cooking.
- Keep electrics leads and appliances away from water.
- Check toasters are clean and placed away from curtains and kitchen rolls.
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean and in good working order. A build-up of fat and grease can ignite a fire.
- Don't put anything metal in the microwave.
- Invest in a fire blanket.

### DEEP FAT FRYING

The most common type of fire is caused by deep fat frying. You're heating several pints of oil to extremely high temperatures. The oil can not only cause terrible burns, but it can go up in flames. It's an ideal fuel for a fire, and difficult to put out.

- Take care when cooking with hot oil – it sets alight easily.
- Make sure food is dry before putting it in hot oil so it doesn't spit.
- If the oil starts to smoke, it's too hot. Turn off the heat and leave it to cool.
- Use a thermostat-controlled electric deep fat fryer. They are safer to use.

### WHAT TO DO IF A PAN CATCHES FIRE

- Don't take any risks. Turn off the heat if it's safe to do so.
- Never throw water over it.
- Don't tackle the fire yourself.



### ELECTRICS

#### How to avoid electrical fires:

- Always check that you use the right fuse to prevent overheating.
- Make sure an electrical appliance has a British or European safety mark when you buy it.
- Certain appliances, such as washing machines, should have a single plug to themselves because they are high-powered.
- Try and keep to one plug per socket.
- When charging electrical goods, follow the manufacturer's instructions and look for the CE mark that indicates that chargers comply with European safety standards.
- Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order to prevent them triggering a fire.
- Keep your eyes peeled for signs of dangerous or loose wiring such as scorch marks, hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that trip for no obvious reason, or flickering lights.
- Check and replace any old cables and leads, especially if they are hidden from view – behind furniture or under carpets and mats.
- Unplugging appliances helps reduce the risk of fire.
- Unplug appliances when you're not using them or when you go to bed.

### FURNITURE

- Check your furniture, furnishings and mattresses are fire-resistant and have a British Standard label. It's particularly important to check if you are buying second-hand.

### PORTABLE HEATERS

- Try to secure heaters up against a wall to stop them falling over.
- Keep them clear from curtains and furniture and never use them for drying clothes.

### ELECTRIC BLANKETS

- Store electric blankets flat, rolled up or loosely folded to prevent damaging the wiring.
- Unplug blankets before you get into bed, unless they have a thermostat control for safe all-night use.
- Don't buy second-hand blankets and check regularly for wear and tear.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## WHITE GOODS

A Hotpoint fridge freezer (Hotpoint FF175BP) has been identified as the initial source of the Grenfell Tower fire. If you have the same model, you can check what to do by visiting [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) and searching for 'product recall'. You will also find information about other products subject to recall.

### Other advice:

- Make sure white goods – fridge, freezers, tumble driers – are not in the way of escape routes; if they catch fire, they could block your way out.
- Make sure they are in good working order and not getting too hot. If any start to make a strange noise, don't ignore it. If you think there may be a problem, always unplug and contact the manufacturer or a qualified appliance repair technician.



## CANDLES

- Make sure candles are secured in a proper holder and away from materials that may catch fire – like curtains.
- Put candles out when you leave the room, and make sure they're put out completely at night.
- Children shouldn't be left alone with lit candles.
- Keep pets away from lit candles.



## BEDTIME CHECK LIST

- Close inside doors at night to stop a fire from spreading.
- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on – like your freezer.
- Check your cooker is turned off.
- Don't leave the washing machine on.
- Turn heaters off and put up fireguards.
- Put candles and cigarettes out properly.
- Make sure exits are kept clear.
- Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them.

# Smoke alarms

**If you are a leaseholder, fit smoke alarms on each floor and test them once a week. The Fire Brigade provides FREE home fire safety checks and will give you a free smoke alarm. You can book an appointment online at [london-fire.gov.uk](http://london-fire.gov.uk) or phone them on 0800 028 44 28.**



As a minimum you should have smoke alarms on every floor – in the hallways and the rooms you use the most, plus a heat alarm in the kitchen.

If you are a council tenant there should already be a smoke alarm in your flat that is connected to the mains electricity. If there isn't, please contact the THH Housing Service Centre on **020 7364 5015** or order one at [my.thh.org.uk](http://my.thh.org.uk).

## TESTING YOUR ALARM

- Mains-powered alarms are powered by your home power supply, but like battery alarms they do require testing.
- Testing smoke alarms checks the power supply or battery.
- If any of your smoke alarms have a one-year battery, make sure it is changed every year. Only take the battery out when you need to replace it.
- Never disconnect or take the batteries out of your alarm if it goes off by mistake.
- Standard battery-operated alarms are the cheapest option, but the batteries need to be replaced every year.
- A lot of people forget to test the batteries, so longer-life batteries are better; ten-year sealed battery smoke alarms are the best option. They are slightly more expensive, but you save on the cost of replacing batteries.

**Strobe light and vibrating pad alarms are available for those who are deaf or hearing impaired. Contact the Action on Hearing Loss Information Line on 0808 808 0123 or textphone 0808 808 9000.**

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR SMOKE ALARMS

- Make testing your smoke alarms part of your regular household routine.
- Test them by pressing the button until the alarm sounds.
- If it doesn't sound, you need to replace the battery or, if you are a council tenant with a wired-in alarm, contact **020 7364 5015** or order a repair at [my.thh.org.uk](http://my.thh.org.uk).
- If a smoke alarm starts to beep on a regular basis, you need to replace the battery immediately.
- If it is a ten-year alarm, you will need to replace the whole alarm every ten years.

## OTHER EQUIPMENT YOU COULD CONSIDER

- Fire blankets are used to put out a fire or wrap a person whose clothes are on fire. They are best kept in the kitchen.
- Heat alarms can detect fires in kitchens where smoke alarms should not be placed.

# Useful contacts

## In the event of a fire call 999

For more information on your local fire safety office, please contact the London Fire Brigade.

Tower Hamlets Fire Safety Team  
Tel: **020 8555 1200**

To report dumped rubbish and other hazards on estates, order repairs or contact us, visit **my.thh.org.uk**. Tenants without smoke detectors can order them at **my.thh.org.uk** as well.

You can also phone us on **020 7364 5015**  
8:30am – 5:30pm Monday to Friday  
(Lines open at 10am on the last Wednesday of every month).

## Smoking



**Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully. Put them out. **Right out!****

- Lit cigarettes thrown into bin chutes or stores will cause a fire.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Use a proper ashtray – never a wastepaper basket or bin.
- Make sure your ashtray can't tip over and is made of a material that won't burn.
- Don't leave a lit cigarette, cigar or pipe lying around. They can easily fall over and start a fire.
- Take extra care if you smoke when you're tired, taking prescription drugs, or if you've been drinking. You might fall asleep and set your bed or sofa on fire.

### **MATCHES AND LIGHTERS**

- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Consider buying child-resistant lighters and matchboxes.