



GREATER MANCHESTER

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION FOR RESIDENTS

LIVING IN FLATS OPERATING EVACUATION STRATEGIES

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) is committed to ensuring the safety of the Greater Manchester community through our prevention, protection, and response activity. We work closely with housing providers and managing agents to support fire safety in blocks of flats so that buildings are safe and residents can feel safe.

This information sheet contains important information about Fire Safety including:

- What to do if you have a fire or become aware of a fire
- Fire safety advice in your flat
- Fire doors and why they are important
- What you can do to help keep your building safe

For your own safety, it is important to understand what to do in the event of a fire, whether it's in your flat or somewhere else in the building.

Your building operates an Evacuation Strategy

This means that if there is a fire somewhere else in the building you must evacuate even if your flat does not seem to be affected.

Failure to evacuate the building upon hearing the fire alarm puts you at serious risk in the event of a fire and could put Firefighters at risk.

If the fire alarm sounds, you must take the following immediate actions:

- ✓ Get everyone in your flat out
- ✓ Make sure your flat door closes behind you
- ✓ Leave the building using the emergency exit routes and stairs provided (don't use the lift)
- ✓ Get out, stay out, call 999

If you feel that you would be unable to evacuate the building without assistance you should contact your housing provider or the managing agent for the building.

What to do when you are outside the building

You should move away from the building and go to the assembly point and wait for Firefighters to arrive. Please do not leave before we arrive – it is important that we know how many people have evacuated the building and you may be asked for details about where you live. If the fire was in your flat tell them where your flat is in the building and where in your flat the fire started and what is on fire.

It may take some time for Firefighters to tackle the fire – you won't be able to go back into the building until the fire has been extinguished and it is safe. You should not try and re-enter the building until told it is safe to do so by a Firefighter.

You may be directed to another building where you can wait until it is safe to return to the building.

What to do if you cannot leave your flat or the building

If you hear the fire alarm and you cannot leave your flat move to a room where you think you will be safe and call 999. Keep the door to the room closed and use towels or bedding at the bottom of the door stop any smoke getting in.

In high rise blocks of flats the law requires a Secure Information Box to be installed at the building with information that GMFRS can use if there is a fire. The Secure Information Box can be used to record details of the location of residents who cannot evacuate the building without help. This information can only be included in the Secure Information Box with your consent. Firefighters will use this information to identify flats where they need to provide assistance to people to leave or to rescue you.

When you phone 999 you should tell the Control Operator that you cannot leave your flat and the reason why – this information will be passed to Firefighters at the building.

What to do when phoning 999

If you have a fire in your flat or become aware of a fire somewhere else in the building, you should always call 999 and ask for 'Fire'

When you dial 999, the first person you speak to is an Operator who will ask you which service you need. When you ask for 'Fire' you are immediately transferred to our control centre with specially trained staff who will send Firefighters to help and ask you for information.

Listen carefully to the Control Operator - the first thing they will ask you for is the address. Give them the building name, address and postcode and then the flat number and floor of your flat.

Once you have provided the address and told us there is a fire, fire engines will be sent to the building. You will be asked more questions so that Firefighters can be passed the information they need when they arrive. Try and stay calm and answer any questions as clearly as you can and stay on the line until the Control Operator ends the call.

If you have a fire or there is smoke in your flat

DO

- ✓ Alert anyone else in your flat
- ✓ Close the door to the room where the fire is
- ✓ Get out of your flat – make sure the flat door closes behind you
- ✓ Call 999 and ask for 'Fire'
- ✓ Leave the building using the stairs if you can

DONT

- ✗ Try and fight the fire - you could be injured
- ✗ Stop to collect belongings
- ✗ Go back into your flat
- ✗ Use the lifts – Firefighters may need to take control of them
- ✗ Re-enter the building until told it is safe

Staying safe in your flat

The best way to stay safe is by taking steps to prevent a fire happening in your home. Most fires in people's homes are caused by cooking or smoking – by taking some simple steps you can reduce the risk of a fire starting – this protects you, your family and your home.

How to prevent a fire

DO

- ✓ Keep tea towels and clothes away from the cooker and hob.
- ✓ Keep matches, lighters and candles out of reach of children
- ✓ Unplug appliances when you're not using them, they are fully charged, or when you go to bed.
- ✓ Be careful with candles and tea lights – don't put them near material that can catch fire or where they can be knocked over
- ✓ Always put cigarettes out properly in an ashtray and never smoke in bed

DONT

- ✗ Leave cooking unattended
- ✗ Overload plug sockets or extension leads
- ✗ Leave appliances on when sleeping or when you go out – this includes washing machines, dryers and dishwashers
- ✗ Leave candles unattended
- ✗ Leave e-bikes or scooters in your hall and never charge them overnight or when you are out

Balcony safety

If you have a balcony it is part of your home so make sure you enjoy your balcony safely.

- ✗ Do not use barbecues, chimineas, fire pits or any other form of open fire on a balcony.
- ✗ Never store or set off fireworks or flares on your balcony.
- ✗ Never store flammable materials on your balcony.
- ✗ Never throw cigarettes off your balcony – they can cause a fire on someone else's balcony. Use a suitable ashtray and dispose of the contents safely.

Smoke alarms save lives

Make sure you have at least one smoke alarm in your flat and it works - test it regularly .

All homes should have at least one smoke detector. If your flat is on more than one level you should have a smoke detector on each floor.

If you rent your home your landlord must provide a smoke alarm in your home.

You should test your smoke alarm at least monthly by pressing the button on them – we recommend you do this once a week and it is a good idea to set a reminder on your phone or a smart speaker if you have one.

If you press the button and there is no sound, you may need to change the batteries or the smoke alarm may need replacing.

If your smoke alarm goes off by mistake, do not take out the batteries. Just wait for it to stop. Many alarms have a hush button that can be pressed to temporarily silence an alarm.

Smoke alarms usually need replacing after ten years. If any of your smoke alarms have a one-year battery, you must change them every year. Only take out the battery when you need to replace it.

If you hear a neighbour's smoke alarm, don't ignore it but alert the resident. If they don't respond, call 999 and ask for Fire.

Fire Doors – protect you and your neighbours

Fire doors are important in flats to protect everyone if there is a fire. In a block of flats lots of the doors will be fire doors – this includes your flat front door and doors in corridors, landings and on the staircase.

Fire doors are designed to stop fire and smoke spreading. They are vital for the Stay Safe strategy in your building.

Flat front doors

Your flat front door is a fire door and is there to make sure that if you do have a fire in your flat the fire and smoke won't spread into the corridor. New laws mean that your housing provider or the managing agent for the building must carry out checks on fire doors to make sure they are not damaged.

Your front door should:

- Close on its own – fire doors are fitted with self-closing devices which can be fitted to the top of the door or be fitted within the frame
- Not have big gaps between the door and the door frame

The law says your housing provider or managing agent must check your flat front door once a year. They will need to inspect the door from both sides and make sure that it closes on its own and there is no damage.

You must not:

- ✗ Change your front door without permission – if you rent, check with your landlord and if you own your flat your lease will explain what permission you need. You may need to obtain Building Control approval to change your front door and if you don't you could be breaking the law.
- ✗ Remove or damage the self-closing device on your door
- ✗ Remove or paint over any strips or seals around the door
- ✗ Drill any holes in the door – for example to fit a spy hole, change the letterbox or fit a new doorbell

Fire doors in communal areas

There will be fire doors in other areas of the building this includes doors in corridors and landings, the doors onto the staircase and doors which provide access to bin rooms and plant rooms.

Fire doors in communal areas:

- ✓ Be marked as fire doors – this is normally a blue circle that says 'Fire door keep shut'
- ✓ Close behind you
- ✓ Should not have big gaps between the door and the frame
- ✓ Have any visible damage – for example broken glass, holes or cracks or splintered wood

You must not:

- ✗ Wedge open doors which are fire doors
- ✗ Damage the door, the door frame or the self-closing device – you could be committing a crime if you do

The law says your housing provider or managing agent must check the fire doors in communal areas every three months.

If you see a fire door wedged open, please close it and if you spot damage to a fire door report it your housing provider or managing agent.

How you can help keep your building safe

All residents can help to keep their neighbours and building safe for everyone.

DO

- ✓ Report damage to fire doors to your housing provider or the managing agent
- ✓ Check before doing any work in your flat that it won't affect the fire safety in the building
- ✓ Allow access to your flat for the front door to be checked

DONT

- ✗ Don't obstruct the communal areas, stairs, corridors and landings as these will be escape routes for the building.
- ✗ Don't prop open fire doors in communal areas
- ✗ Don't store prams, bikes or mobility scooters in corridors

Where to get more information and advice

You can get more information and advice about fire safety in your home on our website www.manchesterfire.gov.uk including an online home fire safety check.

If you are concerned about the fire safety in your building, contact your housing provider or managing agent.