



# The Ideal Property A Landlords Guide

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## Introduction

This booklet contains information on what the housing officers will look for when inspecting properties, and what action can be taken by landlords to reduce the common hazards found within the private rented sector.

As a Landlord it is your responsibility to ensure that your property is free from hazards, or that they are reduced to an acceptable low risk. We have produced this guide on the Ideal Property to enable you to understand the measures that should be taken to avoid hazards, and the ideal standard that should be achieved. This guide only covers the most common hazards so that these can be addressed more fully.



# Damp and Mould Growth



## An Officer will...

check for mould growth in habitable rooms e.g. living rooms/bedrooms, and excess moisture in kitchens and bathrooms. Damp and mould is a common complaint.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. The property should be free from rising and penetrating damp and condensation.
2. The property's damp proof course should be in good condition.
3. Providing clothes drying facilities will discourage tenants drying clothes on heaters, causing damp/mould.
4. Plumbing should be properly installed to prevent leaks and damp caused by splashing during normal use. Facilities should be properly connected to waste pipes and regularly maintained.
5. Guttering and downpipes should be correctly installed, secure and maintained to prevent build up of debris.
6. Extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms should be fitted to help remove moisture.
7. Air bricks, trickle vents, roof and underfloor vents allow natural ventilation.
8. Frost protection will help avoid problems such as burst pipes and tanks.
9. There should be adequate thermal insulation, and appropriate means of space heating (see 'Excess Cold').

Further Information: British Standards *BS 5250 Code of practice for control of condensation in buildings*, *BS 8102: Code of Practice for protection of structures against water from the ground*, *Building Regulation Approved Documents: C (site preparation and resistance to moisture)*, *F (Ventilation of Buildings)*, and *L (Conservation of Fuel and Power)*

# Excess Cold



## An Officer will...

check for a fixed, controllable, fully working heating system in **all rooms** of the dwelling. The officer will also check for sufficient insulation within the dwelling, and causes of excess draughts, for example disrepair to doors and windows.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. Structural thermal insulation should be provided to minimise heat loss. This includes loft insulation (min 270mm), and cavity wall insulation if the property has a cavity wall.
2. A fully working heating system, in all rooms of the dwelling, including halls, should be controllable by the occupants and have a timer switch or thermostatic control. It should be properly installed and maintained by a suitably qualified engineer for example Gas Safe registered.
3. The property should be free from damp (see 'Damp and Mould Growth').
4. Draught proofing of windows and doors, and double glazing will also help the property to maintain heat.
5. In multi-occupied buildings provision for space heating may be centrally controlled. Controls must allow the occupants to regulate the temperature within their dwelling.

Further Information: Building Regulation *Approved Document L1: Conservation of fuel and power in*

# Gas Safety

## An Officer will...

visually inspect all gas appliances and flues within a dwelling. Where an Officer suspects a faulty gas appliance, lack of adequate ventilation or poorly sited appliances a Landlords Gas Safety Certificate will be required from a registered Gas Safe engineer.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. Landlords have a duty to ensure a Gas Safety check is carried out on the installation and each appliance and flue, at each rented property, every 12 months by a Gas Safe registered engineer. A copy of the certificate must be shown to a new tenant before they move in or to an existing tenant within 28 days. Officers will ask tenants if they have seen a valid safety certificate prior to or during their tenancy.
2. A Carbon Monoxide detector should be installed to give warning to occupants if gas is building up within the dwelling. These should be appropriately sited and maintained.
3. Flues should be maintained regularly and not sited close to an openable window. Balanced flues avoid the likelihood of combustion gases spilling back and use less energy.
4. Gas, oil and solid fuel burning appliances must be correctly installed and maintained. Ventilation must be provided in accordance with manufacturers guidelines.
5. LPG is heavier than air, so ground level ventilation should be provided where LPG is used.

Further Information: Building Regulations Approved Document J Combustion appliances and fuel storage systems, BS5440 Installation and maintenance of flues and ventilation for gas appliances of rated input not exceeding 70kW net (1st, 2nd, and 3rd family gases) – Part 2: Specification for installations and maintenance of ventilation for gas appliances, and BS 7880 Code of practice for draught control of existing doors and windows in housing using draught strips, BS 5482 Domestic butane- and propane-gas-burning installations Part I Specification for installations at permanent dwellings and BS 5258 Part I Safety of domestic gas appliances Part I Specification for central heating boilers and circulators.

HSE Gas Safety Advice Line - 0800 300363 or visit [www.hse.gov.uk/gas](http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas)

Gas Safe Register – Help Line 08004085500 or visit [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)

# Electrical Hazards



## An Officer will...

visually inspect the electrical installation, including meters, fuses, wiring, sockets, light fittings and switches. Any defect noted may be subject to further action.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. Electrical safety checks should be undertaken by a competent engineer, and a Electrical Inspection Report covering the whole installation should be obtained. These are usually valid for a period of 5-10 years
2. A Residual Current Device (RCD) can provide additional safety. These can be incorporated into the consumer unit. An RCD is a device which detects deficiencies in the electrical system and switches off the supply.
3. Exposed metalwork such as gas and water pipes should be connected to the main earth terminal.
4. There should be an adequate number of appropriately sited sockets and light switches so as to supply power to all necessary appliances and reduce the need for extension cables. As a guide, the kitchen should have three double sockets above the worktop and two double sockets below the worktops. All other bedrooms and living rooms should have at least two double sockets.
5. There should be no socket outlets in bathrooms other than 12 volt AC (e.g. shaver sockets).
6. A Lightning Protection System (LPS) may need to be present where there is an unacceptable risk of a lightning strike.

Further Information: British Standard *BS7671 Requirements for electrical installations*, and *BS6651* on a procedure for calculating the overall lightning strike risk factor for a building.  
Electrical Safety Council: 0870 040 0561 or visit [www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk)

# Fire Safety

## An Officer will...

check for fire detection appropriate for the size and layout of the property, a protected escape route (e.g. escape windows or fire doors), and defects to electrical or heating systems.

## Reducing the Hazard

- 1. In all dwellings, mains operated smoke detectors must be installed on each level in the property and linked together to ensure detectors sound simultaneously.** These should be properly maintained and regularly tested. (Alarms are available for those with hearing impairment.)
2. There should be a safe means of escape in case of fire from all parts of the dwelling. There may be a need for an escape window on the first floor, particularly where stairs open into a living room rather than a hallway leading to an external exit.
3. The dwelling should be constructed of fire resistant materials. The design and construction should help contain and limit the spread of fire. Internal doors (including entrance doors to flats) should be fire resistant, properly fitted and have self-closers where appropriate.
4. Sufficient and appropriately sited electric sockets will reduce the need for extension leads and overloading of sockets. The electrical installation (distribution board, wiring etc.) should meet the current regulations, and should be properly installed and regularly checked and tested. There should be no defects to sockets or switches.
5. Residual Current Devices (RCDs) help prevent fires caused by electrical deficiencies.
6. All fitted appliances and equipment which present a possible source of ignition should be correctly installed and maintained. A fixed heating system should be properly installed and regularly serviced (see 'Excess Cold'). This will discourage the use of portable heaters.
7. Cookers should not be sited on a through route and should not be near any flammable materials.

Further Information: Building Regulation *Approved Document B*, and British Standards *BS5588, Code of Practice 5839*, and *BS5446*

For properties in the East Midlands, refer to the *Fire Safety Guide* and 31 plans available for free download from the DASH website at <http://www.dashservices.org/Resources/31-Fire-Plans>

Alternatively, contact the Housing Standards Team at the Local Authority in which the property is situate for further advice.

# Food Safety



**An Officer will...** check that the kitchen is of an adequate size, design, and layout to ensure the occupants can store, prepare and cook food in a safe and hygienic manner.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. There should be space for sufficient cooking facilities away from any through route.
2. There should be sufficient appropriate power sockets above and below the worktop (see Electrical Hazards).
3. There should be adequate lighting to the kitchen, and appropriate means of ventilation.
4. There should be enough food storage facilities which should be finished internally and externally with smooth impervious surfaces.
5. The sink and drainer with suitable splashback must be in good repair and easy to clean. There must be an adequate supply of hot and cold water at all times.
6. Wall surfaces should be smooth and easy to clean. Worktop surfaces should be of an adequate size and have an impervious finish. The joint between any sink, drainer or worktop and the adjacent wall should be sealed and watertight.
7. Corners and junctions should be sealed and covered to avoid uncleanable junctions.
8. The kitchen floor should be fitted with appropriate covering, such as tiles or lino, that is easy to clean and free from cracks and other disrepair
9. In multi-occupied premises where facilities are shared, separate food storage, preparation and cooking facilities for different households can help reduce the risk of food poisoning and also reduce stress and anxiety associated with shared use.

Further information: The Unit Layout section of the *Housing Quality Indicator System* (ODPM), and British Standard *BS 6465 Parts I and II*. (see overcrowding section below)



## Falls

### An Officer will...

check for even floor surfaces, steepness of staircases, adequate handrails/guarding and heights of windowsills. The assessment will include risk of falls in the garden/yard area and the routes into and out of the property.

### Reducing the Hazard

1. There must be adequate natural and artificial lighting in all rooms and to staircases to minimise the risk of falls.
2. Guarding should be provided to stairs, landings and balconies. It should be at least 1,100mm high and strong enough to support the weight of people leaning against it. There should be no openings to the guarding larger than 100mm.
3. Stairs should have a minimum width of 900mm to allow the stairs to be negotiated by a child and adult side-by-side.
4. Tread lengths should be 280-360mm and riser heights should be 100-180mm. These should remain consistent throughout the flight.
5. Sturdy handrails should be sited 900-1,000mm from the stair and should be easy to grasp and extend the full length of the flight.
6. There should be reasonable space at the top and bottom of any stairs, with no projections or sharp edges. It is not acceptable to have non-safety glass doors located near the foot of a flight of stairs.
7. The headroom to stairs themselves should be a minimum of 2,000mm.
8. Floorboards should be laid to an even finish, and carpets and floor fittings throughout the property should be in good repair and properly fitted to ensure there are no trip hazards
9. All emergency escape windows must have opening limiters, set to 100mm, which can be overridden in case of emergency.
10. Where internal window sills are lower than 800mm from the floor, safety glass and/or guarding/restrictors should be provided.
11. Outdoor paths and yards should be even and incorporate adequate drainage.

Further Information: Building Regulations *Approved Document A: Structure*, *Approved Document Part K*, *Approved Document Part N*, and British Standards BS5395, 5385, 585, 6180, 6431, 5588, and 6262- 4. Also, see Building Regulations *Approved Document Part M* which deals with the welfare and convenience for building users, and British Standard BS6465 *Sanitary installations – Part 1 Code of Practice for space requirements for sanitary appliances*, and BS 6340 *Shower units*. Also, Building Regulations *Approved Document L1: conservation of fuel and power*, *Approved Document K: protection from falling, collision and impact*, *Approved Document N: Glazing – safety in relation to impact, opening and cleaning*, *Approved Document B: fire safety*, and British Standards BS 6849, Part 1, and BS6869, *On balconies etc.*, *Building Regulations Approved Document K: protection from*

# Security

**An Officer will...**

check that all external doors, gates and fences to the property and gardens are in good condition and secure against unauthorised entry.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. The use of window locks, deadlocks, burglar alarms, security lights, window grilles, spy holes and chains on entrance doors can improve security.
2. Tenants must have access to keys for all locks.
3. However, excess security measures can hamper means of escape in case of fire. (see 'Fire')

Further Information: British Standard *BS 82200 Guide for security of buildings against crime – Part 1: Dwellings*.

# Overcrowding

**An Officer will...**

check that the property is an adequate size for the household.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. There must be an adequate number of bedrooms for the people occupying the house, depending on room sizes, sex of occupants and relationship of occupants.
2. An officer will generally allow a property with one bedroom to be occupied by two people, and a property with two bedrooms can be occupied by up to four people.
3. The kitchen, living area, and bathrooms should also be of an adequate size for the household.
4. Each bath, shower and WC should be sited in a bathroom with a lockable door.

Further Information: Unit Size and Layout sections of the *Housing Quality Indicator system* (ODPM), and publications such as *Metric Handbook– Planning and Design Data*. For East Midlands properties, see the 'Amenities & Space – A Landlords Guide' booklet produced by DASH. The guide is available for free download from [www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk](http://www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk)

# Hot Surfaces



## An Officer will...

check the kitchen layout and space and whether a cooker is situated in a hazardous location, close to a door or through route. The rest of the property will be checked for exposed pipework etc. A typical accident involves a person falling and becoming trapped between furniture and the hot surface.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. Kitchens should be of adequate size and of such a layout so as to ensure that cookers are safely sited away from doors, through routes and other potentially hazardous areas (see 'Food Safety').
2. Where a cooker is provided, it should be in good working order and securely placed.
3. There should be adequate guarding of any open flame. The temperature of exposed surfaces of radiators, pipework, hot water tanks, taps, storage heaters, boilers and tanks should be limited to a maximum of 43°C, or be appropriately guarded.
4. The best way to address risks from scalding is to limit the temperature delivered at taps. Thermostatic mixer valves can be fitted, and it is advised that water to baths is about 45°C. Kitchen sink taps should be limited to 60°C.
5. In high risk premises such as hostels and sheltered housing the surface temperature of accessible heating appliances and pipework should be a maximum of 43°C, or guarded.

Further Information: Building Regulation *Approved Document J*, and British Standard *BS4086*, *BS 1945* and *BS 8423*.

## Personal Hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage



### An Officer will...

check that there are adequate personal and clothes washing facilities. The officer will also check for adequate drainage including guttering.

### Reducing the Hazard

1. The WC compartment or bathroom should have adequate heat, light and ventilation.
2. A wash hand basin with hot and cold water, should be provided in the same compartment as a WC.
3. Each bath, shower, WC and wash hand basin should be stable and secure, and be able to be easily cleaned. WC's should have a working flush.
4. The bathroom should be provided with a lockable door capable of giving privacy.
5. There should be supplies of hot and cold water over each sink.
6. There should be space for a washing machine with a power socket adjacent. There should be clothes drying facilities, preferably both outside and inside.
7. All water-using facilities must be properly connected to adequate waste pipes carrying the waste from the dwelling to a drainage system. Each waste pipe should incorporate a trap to provide a water seal to prevent draughts and foul air entering the dwelling.
8. Connections between WC's and the drain must be air-tight and adequately ventilated to avoid leakage of the foul sewage or smells. The system should be designed and constructed so as to ensure that the pipes do not block.
9. See the 'Amenities and Space Guide' available from [www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk](http://www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk) for the number of amenities required for multi-occupied properties.

Further Information: Building Regulations *Approved Document G: Hygiene*, *Approved Document H: Drainage and waste disposal*, and British Standards *BS 6465 Sanitary installations Parts I and II*, and *BS 8000 Part 13: Workmanship on building sites. Code of practice for above ground drainage and sanitary appliances*.

# Domestic Hygiene, Pests and Refuse

**An Officer  
will...**

check that a property can be kept clean and hygienic.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. The design, construction and maintenance of the dwelling, including kitchen and bathroom, should enable it to be kept clean.
2. Walls, floors, ceilings and surfaces should be smooth and free from cracks to enable them to be easily cleaned.
3. The exterior of the property should be free from any cracks, holes or gaps larger than the diameter of a pencil in order to prevent access by pests, particularly around pipes and cables. The property should not provide harbourage for pests.
4. There should be suitable provision for the storage of refuse outside and inside the dwelling.

Further Information: Building Regulations *Approved Document H* and British Standard *BS5906 Code of Practice for storage and on-site treatment of solid waste from buildings*.

# Use of Amenities

**An Officer  
will...**

check for the risk of physical strain associated with functional space and other features such as windows and light fittings.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. The layout of the dwelling and in particular the kitchen and bathroom should be convenient, safe and easy to use.
2. Wash hand basins, sinks, worktops, WC's, baths and showers should be located at an appropriate height, and with sufficient free space to allow use without strain.
3. Electrical sockets should be conveniently sited.
4. Light switches should be sited near to door openings, at each end of staircases and corridors, and at a reasonable height.
5. Door handles should be at a reasonable height and window catches should be readily accessible without strain.
6. Cupboards and shelves should be sited where they can be easily reached.

Further Information: British Standard *BS 8213*, *BS6465 Part 2*, and *BS 4467*. Building Regulations *Approved Document M* addresses welfare and convenience for building users.

# Structural Collapse and Falling Elements



**An Officer  
will...**

check the dwelling for any disrepair that may result in a collapse or falling part either internally or externally.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. The roof structure should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to be strong enough to support the weight of the covering, be securely fixed and to cope with adverse weather conditions. Roof coverings and chimney stacks/pots should be secure and maintained in good repair.
2. Lintels should be of sufficient strength and be maintained in good repair. Frames to all doors and windows should be securely fixed and maintained.
3. All external pipework and gutters should be securely fixed and properly maintained.
4. Any external cladding, rendering or similar finishing and any coping should be securely fixed and in good repair.
5. All external balconies and walkways should be designed, constructed and maintained so as to be capable of supporting their own weight and the imposed loads.
6. Ceilings should be designed, constructed, fixed and maintained to be strong enough to remain intact.
7. Internal walls should be designed, constructed and maintained to be strong enough to support their own weight and any loads reasonably expected.
8. Floors and staircases should be designed, constructed and maintained to be of sufficient strength to support the weight of furniture, fixtures and fittings.
9. Fixtures and fittings should be properly and securely fixed.

Further Information: Building Regulations Part A and *Approved Documents A and F2*.

# Collision and Entrapment

**An Officer will...**

look for elements of the property that may cause injury, for example trapping fingers in doors or colliding with low ceilings.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. Openable windows should not project over pathways.
2. Self-closers on doors should be adjusted so as not to slam.
3. Doors and windows should be maintained in good repair.
4. Safety glazing should be provided in doors and windows where necessary (see 'Falls').

Further Information: Building Regulations *Approved Document K*, *Approved Document N*, British Standard *BS 8213: Part 1*, and *BS6262: Part 4*.

# Lighting

**An Officer will...**

check for sufficient and appropriate natural and artificial lighting throughout the property.

## Reducing the Hazard

1. Windows should be of adequate size, shape and position to allow for reasonable daylight into rooms.
2. There should be adequate artificial lighting in all rooms throughout the property, especially rooms of limited natural lighting.
3. Windows should be wide enough to provide a reasonable view of the immediate surroundings to allow supervision of outside recreation space and the means of access to the dwelling.

Further Information: British Standard *BS8206 Code of Practice Parts 1 and 2* and guides on lighting and windows published by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE).

## Additional Information

Tenants are advised to always keep up with rent even when the house has a disrepair issue or if there is a dispute with the Landlord.

Tenants are advised to seek advice from relevant sources to deal with disputes.

Rent arrears will not stop an officer dealing with housing disrepair.

Local Authorities have a duty to deal with harassment of tenants and illegal evictions.

A landlord must carry out major works before the property is re-let.

If there is a grievance against a tenant the proper legal procedures should be followed.

In extreme circumstances officers can suspend action until a tenant leaves a property.

Please seek your own legal advice in order to evict tenants, or contact your Local Authority's Housing Advice Section for advice about correct procedures for dealing with antisocial or problem tenants.

... property or garden. Noise can cause physical and

## Using this Guide

Not all of the standards contained within this document are prescriptive legal requirements, but a guide and should be regarded as minimum standards.

Other factors or compensatory features will be taken into account when inspecting a property, therefore allowing for a degree of flexibility in certain circumstances. These factors could include the shape of the usable living space, or the needs and wishes of the occupants.

This document should be used as a guide only, and Local Authorities should be contacted for confirmation of their standards. Details for each Local Authority in the East Midlands can be obtained from the DASH website.





DASH Services, working with landlords, tenants and Local Authorities to raise standards in housing.

Further information on DASH, its associates, projects and successes can be found by visiting our website at <http://www.dashservices.org.uk/> or by calling 01332 641111.

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## Also Available:

- Housing Act 2004 Guidance - Local Authority Enforcement Options.
- Housing Act 2004 Guidance – Amenities & Space in HMO's.
- Housing Act 2004 Guidance - The 29 Hazards. A Landlords Guide
- Housing Act 2004 Guidance - Houses in Multiple Occupation - Licensing in the East Midlands
- Housing Act 2004 Guidance - Tenancy Deposit Protection Schemes
- The Decent Homes Standard. A Landlords Guide
- Buying to Let – A Landlords Guide

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