

PRESTON CITY COUNCIL

LANDLORDS' INFORMATION PACK

SAFETY OF GOODS IN LET ACCOMMODATION a guide for landlords

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR SPECIFIC GOODS?

1.0 Electrical Appliances

1.1 All electrical appliances, such as cookers, fires, toasters, kettles, etc, should be checked to ensure that they meet up-to-date safety standards.

- In particular, each item should:
- be complete and in working order
- have all original instructions and warnings
- have a mains lead in good condition, properly secured at the plug and at the appliance
- have a correctly fitted approved plug with sleeved live and neutral pins
- be fitted with the correctly rated fuse

Keep, and up-date, an inventory of appliances supplied with the let.

2.0 Should you have electrical appliances tested?

2.1 The law does not specifically require testing; it just requires that appliances are safe. However, it is strongly recommended that appliances be tested. Testing protects the tenant from danger and would be of assistance to landlords and letting agents who may be prosecuted or find themselves subject to civil actions.

2.2 How should you test appliances?

Tests should be done by a competent electrical engineer. They should be done at the time of purchase and thereafter at least annually, or whenever you are alerted to a need for an interim test, e.g. the tenant reports a fault.

The engineer's report should be dated, should identify each appliance, specify the tests and the result. Items that pass should be marked with a sticker indicating a pass and dated and signed. Failed items must be withdrawn immediately.

2.3 Should you do anything else?

With appliances in holiday lets, it is worth giving a visual check before the next tenants move in to satisfy yourself there has been no obvious damage.

3.0 Gas Appliances

3.1 Gas appliances must be safe and conform to relevant safety standards. You should have a checking procedure similar to that for electrical appliances using a qualified Gas Safe Registered engineer.

4.0 Upholstered Furniture

4.1 Upholstered furniture in rented accommodation must meet the flammability requirements in the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988.

4.2 What furniture is included?

Any of the following kinds of furniture (if they contain upholstery): settees, chairs, bed bases, mattresses, headboards, children's furniture (inc. prams and pushchairs), stools, dining chairs and sofa beds; cushions and pillows are controlled as well as fitted or loose covers for upholstered furniture. Curtains and bedding are not included. Upholstered furniture made before 1950 is exempt, even if it has been re-upholstered.

4.3 What are the requirements for upholstered furniture?

Any furniture in let accommodation which was already being supplied in that let accommodation before 1st March 1993 need not comply until the first new let after 1st January 1997. However, any additional or replacement furniture supplied since 1st March 1993 must meet the requirements NOW. All upholstered furniture in properties first let on or after 1st March 1993 must comply NOW.

4.4 What are the flammability controls?

All filling materials must pass relevant ignitability tests. In most cases, covering materials must pass the match test and the cover/filling combination must pass the cigarette test.

Most new furniture must be labeled but there are no labeling requirements for secondhand furniture or furniture in rented accommodation.

4.5 How can you make checks?

Age: For most new furniture, the Regulations fully came into effect on 1st March 1990, so anything bought since that date should comply. Anything fully re-upholstered since then should also comply.

Labeling: Most new furniture must have a permanent label attached showing compliance, an example is shown below. If it bears the warnings: "Covers are not match resistant" or "Caution- careless use of matches could set fire to this furniture" the furniture WILL NOT COMPLY. Permanent labels were never required for bed bases or mattresses. However, a blue label indicating compliance with BS 7177:1991 should be evidence of fire safety compliance.

<p>CARELESSNESS CAUSES FIRE BATCH NO..... To comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988. This item does not contain a schedule 3 interliner. All foams, fillings and composite have been tested by our supplier(s) to ensure compliance with the relevant ignitability test. Covers are match resistant. Further details available from your retailer.</p>
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4.6 What other precautions can you take?

If there is no manufacturer's label to indicate compliance, you will be taking a risk if you use that furniture.

If the labels are missing -
proof of date of purchase may assist you
the manufacturer may confirm compliance

Otherwise, only a destructive test of part of a set of furniture may be the only way of confirming compliance. The test is destructive and expensive.

5.0 Other Goods

The previous categories of goods are considered to pose a high risk to tenants but they can comply with safety requirements. Most other types of goods are caught by the general safety provisions and must be reasonably safe. However, some goods, although capable of being safe, are intrinsically dangerous. They include:

- Paraffin heaters,
- portable LPG heaters,
- oil lamps,
- ornamental lamps containing chemicals (glitter lamps),
- furniture containing glass,
- DIY equipment and garden machinery.

You may be wise to decide not to supply such goods to tenants.

6.0 WHAT IF YOU DECIDE TO TAKE A CHANCE?

Suspicious tenants are contacting trading standards offices. If you have done nothing positive to confirm compliance of your goods, you risk prosecution if they do not pass safety tests.

Offences can attract a maximum fine of up to £5000 per non-conforming item.

WHERE CAN YOU GET FURTHER HELP?

Additional advice on general safety in let accommodation is available from

Lancashire County Council
Trading Standards Service
Room D21
County Hall
Pitt Street
Lancashire
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