

PRESTON CITY COUNCIL

LANDLORDS INFORMATION PACK

**GUIDANCE OF MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM FIRE
in
HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION**

This guidance summaries the current requirements for fire protection in houses in multiple occupation required under the provisions of Part XI of the Housing Act 1985. More detailed guidance is available from the address below and from the Department of Environment Circular 12/92.

The requirements are designed principally to enable occupants to escape to a place of safety and secondly to enable them to control a minor fire before a fire spreads from its source.

In some Category B Houses in Multiple Occupation, it may be acceptable to apply a separate Low Risk Category B Fire Standard. Details are available on request.

The principle method to enable escape is by provision of a protected route, which would normally include a stairwell, landings and hall, together with any corridors or lobbies leading onto that stairwell or hallway.

Doors.

- (i) Doors onto the protected route will normally be half hour fire doors.
- (ii) Where these doors are in regular use by occupants, they will be fitted with overhead hydraulic self-closers. Three hinges will be fitted to all doors in the normal size range and these shall be made of a material with a high melting point. Locks will be openable from within without the use of a key. This also applies to final exit doors. Intumescent strips will be fitted to all these doors' casings or to the doors themselves. Except for those doors of rooms, which open onto a protected inner lobby, the intumescent strips will be fitted with an integral smoke seal.
- (iii) Fire doors will be a good fit to frame with 2 - 4mm gaps. Eight millimetres gap beneath the door is acceptable. There should be no gap between smoke seal and door or casing. The door must latch positively when closed.

Gaps around door casings and voids adjacent to locks should be stopped with intumescent material.
- (iv) Where these doors serve only rooms such as storerooms (not normally accessible to tenants) or store cupboards, boiler rooms, etc., a door closer may not be necessary.
- (v) Self contained flats should be entered through a half-hour protected lobby unless there is a protected lobby outside the flat. At second floor level and above all lettings should be separated from the stairway by a protected lobby or corridor.

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Walls, Floors and Ceilings.

- (i) Walls, floors and ceilings adjacent to the protected route will be half hour fire resisting. Typically, this protection will be achieved by masonry construction and by either, concrete floor construction or, a floor/ceiling in which the floor is tongued and grooved, the joists are of adequate strength and the ceiling is 12.5mm plasterboard. Plasterboard joints should be supported by noggins, the boards fixed at 150mm centres along joists and noggins, and the joints scrimmed and skimmed.

Where walls are studded, the minimum stud size will be 75 x 50mm and the faces will be in 12.5mm plasterboard finished as indicated above.

There is a very wide range of additional ways to achieve half hour protection and Housing Standards Officers will be happy to discuss these with you. An information sheet is available.

- (ii) Party walls must be built up to the roofline to provide one-hour fire protection.
- (iii) To give half hour fire resistance, glazing on the protected route will be by the use of minimum 6mm wired glass in panes not exceeding 1.2m². In fire doors, this glazing is only permitted over 1.1m from the floor. Below this height, glazing must be insulated in line with British Standard 476. Guidance is available on acceptable beading. Beading, if not incombustible, must be protected with intumescent paint or metal capping.
- (iv) Any structural steel must be protected to provide appropriate fire protection.

Other Issues on the Protected Route.

- (i) Bathrooms, w.c.'s and shower rooms opening onto the means of escape, which have natural light and ventilation and do not have electrical amenities other than a light, will not need to meet the requirements for fire protection.
- (ii) Gas and electricity meters located on the protected route must be re-located or be fully protected by half-hour fire resistant construction; made lockable with keys issued to relevant persons and bearing the British Standard symbol "Fire Door Keep Locked".
- (iii) Built in cupboards on the protected route must be provided with half hour fire protection or removed or permanently fixed shut by e.g. securing with substantial screws. If kept in use, they must be made lockable with keys issued to relevant persons and bearing the British Standard symbol "Fire Door Keep Locked".
- (iv) Gas and electrical appliances, cupboards, wardrobes, etc. and storage of any kind are not permitted on the protected route.
- (v) In properties with a single stairway to the top floor, it is advantageous to provide ventilation to dispose of the products of combustion by, e.g. opening windows of 1m² or 5% of the stairs cross sectional area whichever is the greater. Preferably, the window will be opened by a mechanism controlled by activation of the fire alarm system.
- (vi) Escape stairs must be at least as wide as the doors leading onto them.

For properties serving a maximum of fifty people, horizontal escape routes must be minimum 800mm.

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Basements.

- (i) Basements should ideally be cut off from the building above. Where this is not feasible, protection must be given by installation of a half-hour fire door at the head and foot of the stairs. It is acceptable to meet this requirement by the formation of a protected lobby, either at the head or foot of the stairs, where each door is a half-hour fire door.
- (ii) Basements of greater than 150m² area must be provided with two escape routes to a safe place at ground level.
- (iii) Inner habitable rooms in basements must be provided with a secondary means of escape, e.g. by an escape window with an unobstructed opening minimally 850mm high, 500mm wide with the bottom of the window opening between 900 – 1,100 above floor level.
- (iv) Where escape is into a closed back yard, the depth of the yard must be at least equal to the height of the building measured half way up the roof slope.
- (v) In properties with traditional undeveloped cellars, ceilings must provide half hour fire protection and be covered by at least one smoke detector. In large cellars or cellars separated into a number of rooms, additional detection may be needed.

Emergency Lighting.

- (i) The protected route from the exit doors of lettings to final exits must be covered by escape lighting to comply with B.S.5266. In some instances, emergency lighting will also cover specific habitable rooms.

Fire Alarm System.

- (i) In properties of ground to first floor levels, with or without a basement, smoke detectors located on the escape route are acceptable. Typically one will be located on each hallway and landing and one in each protected corridor. A heat detector must be located in each kitchen. Detectors and alarm sounders will be wired into the mains system and interlinked. Detectors must meet B.S.5446 : Part 1 standard.
- (ii) Properties used as hostels or catering for vulnerable groups may require the higher level of protection indicated below.
- (iii) In properties of three or more storeys and most hostels, a more comprehensive means of escape system is required. (B.S.5839 : Part 1 : 1998). Typically this will include smoke detectors on the protected route and in any internal lobbies. Heat detectors will be fitted in all habitable rooms, which open onto the means of escape. W.c.'s. etc., which open onto the means of escape and which are fitted with electrical appliances such as extractor fans and electrical shower units will also be fitted with heat detectors. All kitchens will be covered by heat detectors. Break glass call points will be located on each landing and at all final exit points. These items of equipment are to meet B.S.5445 : Part 5 : 1997 standard.
- (iv) The system will have a control panel, which should be located close to the principal exit.
- (v) In general, protected corridors or protected lobbies shall be provided adjacent to the protected escape stairs in properties of three or more storeys.

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Where a lobby forms the entrance to an individual letting and inner room(s) are served by the type of protection described in 19 below, only the door onto the escape route need be fitted with smoke seals. The other door(s) must, nevertheless, be fitted with intumescent strips. All the doors must be fitted with overhead hydraulic self-closers.

- (vi) In self contained accommodation, provided with an internal lobby adjacent to the protected route, the lobby will be protected by a smoke detector connected to the main system but the rooms behind the lobby may be fitted with an interlinked alarm system equivalent to that required for two storey properties. (See 14 above). Any bedroom/bed sitting room must also have fitted a sounder linked to the main system. Where there would be a high risk of false alarms, should a smoke detector be fitted, then a heat detector should be fitted instead. This shall be backed up by a stand alone smoke alarm powered from the lighting circuit in any room used for sleeping.
- (vii) Sounders may be remote or integrated into detector heads. Minimum sound levels are 75 dBA at bed head positions and 65 dBA or 5 dBA above ambient sound levels; whichever is the higher, in all other areas except unoccupied cellars.

You are strongly advised to locate sounders in each bedroom.

General.

- (i) Where a building has an area of more than 200m² on any storey, two escape routes should be provided.
- (ii) A maintenance logbook must be kept by the person having control of the building and this must be made available to Housing Standards Officers on request.
- (iii) The internal arrangements of accommodation must be such that it is not necessary to pass through an area of higher risk when leaving.
- (iv) In addition to the above, the Council has a number of guidance notes covering particular aspects of these requirements. These are available on request.
- (v) Fire fighting equipment will be provided in the following locations:
 - Kitchens – a 1m² fire blanket and 2 litre multi risk 5A : 55B rated fire extinguisher conveniently located away from and on the escape side of the cooker.
 - At the head of the stairs on each storey and close to the external exit door – a 6 litre multi risk 13A : 144B extinguisher.

Note: This is a guidance note and not a statement of law. If you are unsure of your legal position, you may approach one of the Housing Standards Team of Preston City Council's Environment Directorate, Town Hall, Lancaster Road, Preston, PR1 2RL or by telephoning (01772) 906520, 906725 or 906739. Alternatively, seek legal advice.

Housing Standards/AFB
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