

Harrow Council Selective Licensing Fire Safety Guidance

Introduction

This short guide is mainly based on LACORS – Guidance on fire safety provisions for certain types of existing housing. The LACORS Guidance was subject to an extensive consultation exercise and the final content has received input from a large number of Local Housing Authorities, Fire Risk Assessors and landlords as well as Communities and Local Government and the Chief Fire Officers Association. ‘A quick Guide to Fire Safety – Selective Licensing’ is intended to provide landlords and tenants with basic information in relation to Fire Safety. If you wish to discuss the contents of this guidance, please contact the Residential Licensing Team via email Residential.Licensing@harrow.gov.uk

The recommendations below are based on properties considered to present a ‘normal risk’ for their type. This is based on the general assumption that the occupants are able-bodied and will be capable of using the means of escape unaided to reach a place of ultimate safety, and that there are no unusually high risk elements. If this is not the case or there are other factors which present a higher than normal risk then additional measures may be required.

Scope of this guidance

This guidance is intended for single household occupancy, i.e. houses, flats and maisonettes occupied by persons living as a single household. The term ‘household’ means either a single person or members of the same family who are living together. This includes people who are married or living together as married (including those in same-sex relationships). ‘Family’ means specific relatives: parents, grandparents, children and step-children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces or cousins. Foster children are also treated as part of their parents’ household.

Single household occupancy over Commercial Premises

Generally, provided that Commercial Premises are separated from the living accommodation above (e.g. a separate entrance to accommodation at the rear or to the side) with construction affording a compartmentation of 60 minutes fire resistance, your house would be regarded as a separate unit and little more will be required (see below).

However, if Commercial Premises are considered to be a high fire risk, or there is a possibility that a fire, smoke and/or heat could affect the means of escape for the occupants of the accommodation (e.g. there is no separate entrance to accommodation and you enter the living accommodation through Commercial Premises), then an early warning fire detection system should be provided.

In such circumstances, the fire detection and fire alarm system in the accommodation should be extended and interlinked into the commercial premises. For more information, please contact the Residential Licensing Team or Brigade’s Fire Safety Duty Officer at the London Fire Brigade on 020 8555 1200 ext. 89170 or 89171.

Single household occupancy up to two storeys

Escape routes

- No requirement for full 30-minute protected route, but the escape route should have sound, conventional construction and should not pass through risk rooms.
- No requirement for fire doors, but sound, well-constructed and close-fitting conventional doors are required.
- All doors should be kept closed at night.
- Please note: where construction standards are poor, travel distances are long or other higher risk factors are present, a 30-minute protected route may be required.

Fire separation

- No requirement for additional fire resistance, but walls and floors should be of sound, conventional construction.
- If a basement/cellar is present, 30-minute separation between the cellar and the ground floor escape route is the ideal.

Fire detection and alarm system: Grade D, LD3 system

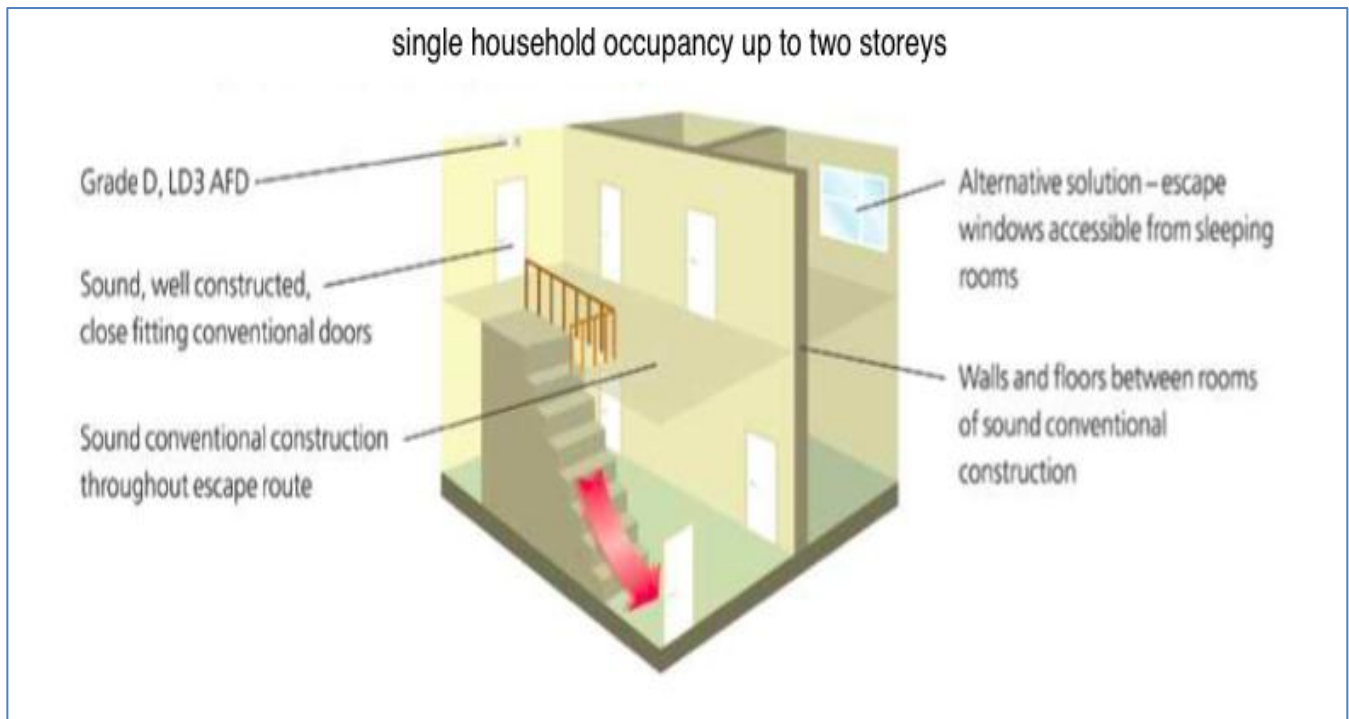
- Interlinked mains wired smoke alarms with integral battery back-up located in the escape route at ground and first floor levels; and
- Additional interlinked smoke alarms with integral battery back-up located in any cellar
- Where a new or replacement fixed solid fuel appliance is installed in a dwelling, a carbon monoxide alarm should be provided in the room where the appliance is located.
- If the fixed solid fuel appliance is located in a bedroom, mains wired carbon monoxide alarm should be provided.
- If the fixed solid fuel appliance is located in common parts, carbon monoxide alarms should be powered by a battery designed to operate for the working life of the alarm. The alarm should incorporate a warning device to alert users when the working life of the alarm is due to pass.

Lighting of escape routes

- No requirement for emergency escape lighting, but conventional artificial lighting is required.

Fire fighting equipment

- A fire blanket should be provided in the kitchen.



Single household occupancy of three or four storeys

Escape routes

- No requirement for full 30-minute protected route, but the escape route should have sound, conventional construction and the travel distance should not be excessive.
- No requirement for fire doors, but sound, well-constructed and close-fitting conventional doors are required.
- All doors should be kept closed at night.

Please note: where construction standards are poor, travel distances are long or other higher risk factors are present, a 30-minute protected route may be required.

Fire separation

- No requirement for additional fire resistance, but walls and floors should be of sound, conventional construction.
- If a basement/cellar is present, 30-minute separation between the cellar and the ground floor escape route is required.

Fire detection and alarm system: Grade D, LD3 system

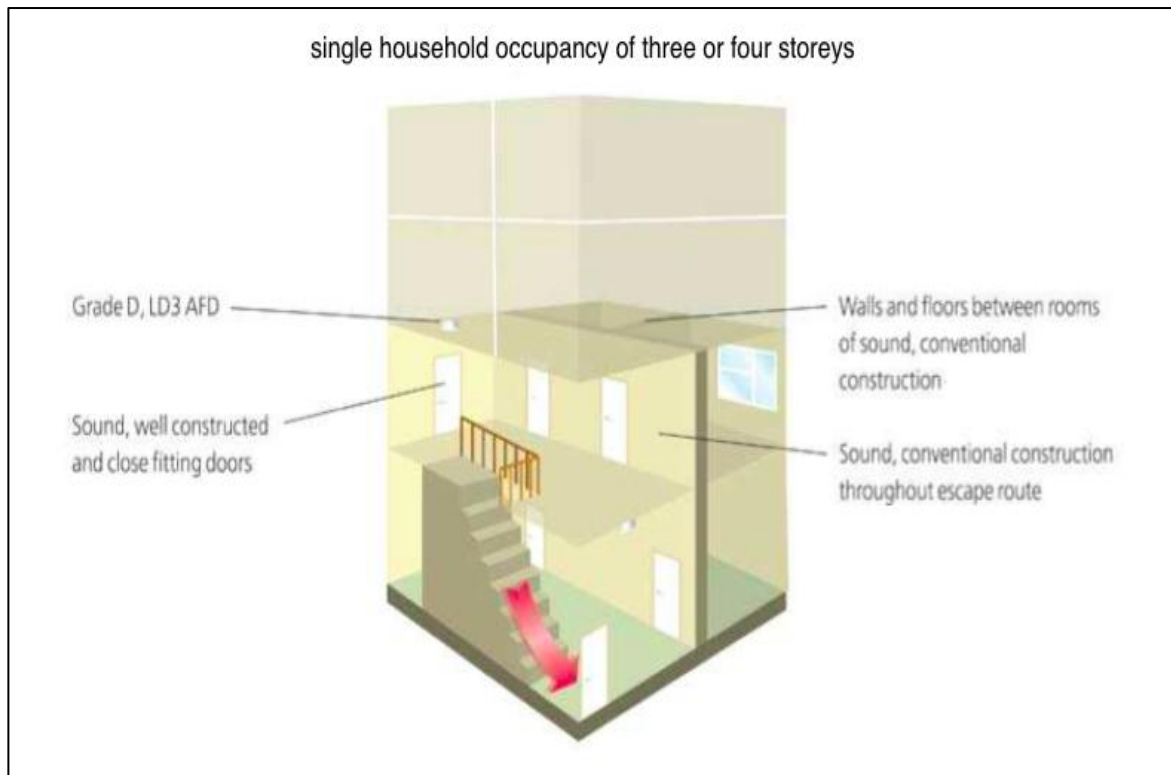
- Interlinked mains wired smoke alarms with integral battery back-up located in the escape route at all floor levels; and
- Additional interlinked smoke alarms with integral battery back-up located in any cellar.
- Where a new or replacement fixed solid fuel appliance is installed in a dwelling, a carbon monoxide alarm should be provided in the room where the appliance is located
- If the fixed solid fuel appliance is located in a bedroom, mains wired carbon monoxide alarm should be provided.
- If the fixed solid fuel appliance is located in common parts, carbon monoxide alarms should be powered by a battery designed to operate for the working life of the alarm. The alarm should incorporate a warning device to alert users when the working life of the alarm is due to pass.

Lighting of escape routes

- No requirement for emergency escape lighting, but conventional artificial lighting is required.

Fire fighting equipment

- A fire blanket should be provided in the kitchen.



Single household occupancy of five or six storeys

Escape routes

- 30-minute protected route is required, including 30-minute fire-resisting construction and FD30 doors to all risk rooms (without smoke seals). Secondary means of escape is required from top floor.
- All doors should be kept closed at night. All doors should be close fitting as designed. Fire doors should never be propped or wedged open. Any damage to fire doors should be noted and repaired. Any damaged or missing smoke seals must be replaced like-for-like.

Fire separation

- No requirement for additional fire resistance generally, but walls and floors should be of sound, traditional construction. Lateral fire-resisting separation of the top two floors from the remainder of the house is required. If a cellar is present, provide 30-minute separation between the cellar and the ground floor escape route.

Fire detection and alarm system: Grade A, LD3 system

- Detection throughout common parts, in the kitchen (heat detection) and any cellar.

Lighting of escape routes

- No requirement for emergency escape lighting, but conventional artificial lighting is required

Fire fighting equipment

- A fire blanket should be provided in the kitchen

Fire safety signs

- Directional fire exit signs indicating way to secondary means of escape

Surface finishes & floor coverings (paragraphs 28- 29)

- No requirement



Management and maintenance of fire safety

Gas installations

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 deal with the installation, maintenance and use of gas appliances, fittings and flues in domestic and certain commercial premises. They place duties on certain landlords to ensure that gas appliances, fittings and flues provided for tenants' use are safe. Essentially any lease under seven years is covered.

Landlords must ensure that gas fittings and flues are maintained in a safe condition. Gas appliances should be serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If these are not available, then it is recommended that they are serviced annually.

Landlords must ensure that a gas safety check is carried out annually on each gas appliance/flue. Before any new tenancy starts they must make sure that such a check has been carried out within one year before the start of the tenancy (unless the appliances in the property have been installed for less than one year, in which case they should be checked within one year of their installation date). A record of each gas safety check must be kept for at least two years and a copy must be given to existing tenants within 28 days of the check being completed, or to any new tenant before they move in (in certain cases there is an option to display the record in the property instead).

Further advice can be obtained at www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Electrical installations

Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994. The Regulations require that all electrical equipment supplied by the landlord is safe. In measuring safety, the landlord or managing/letting agent needs to ensure that the equipment complies with current UK requirements for safety of domestic electrical products. There is no mandatory requirement for the equipment to undergo any safety testing, but regulations require that any equipment supplied after 9th of January 1995 shall be marked with the appropriate CE symbol. Where the safe use of the equipment relies upon the user being aware of any particular characteristic, suitable information or instruction booklet should be provided. The Regulations are enforced by the local authority trading standards departments which can provide further advice to landlord/managing agents regarding these requirements.

Furniture and furnishings regulations

Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended) set levels of fire resistance for domestic upholstered furniture, furnishings and other products containing upholstery. The regulations cover most items of furniture found in rented accommodation including beds, mattresses, pillows and cushions. They do not apply to carpets, curtains or duvets. The regulations apply to all persons who supply furniture and furnishings in connection with accommodation in the course of a business. In general, this includes landlords, letting agents and managing agents.

All furniture within lettings commencing after 1 January 1997 must meet the fire resistance requirements of the regulations. However, the regulations do not apply to furniture made before 1950 or to re-upholstered furniture made before that date.

Since 1988 all new furniture (except mattresses and bed bases) have had to carry a permanent label stating that it complies with the fire resistance standards specified in the regulations. However, absence of such a label does not mean that the furniture does not comply, as the label may have been removed after the furniture was supplied; some furniture manufactured before 1988 may comply with the requirements anyway. Landlords and managing agents must ensure that the furniture supplied meets the fire resistance requirements, and the only practical way of doing so is to ensure that the furniture is labelled by the manufacturer in this way. If this cannot be ascertained, the furniture should be replaced. The regulations are enforced by local authority trading standards departments, which can give further advice to landlords/managing agents regarding these requirements.

Carbon monoxide and smoke alarms requirements

From 1st October 2015 landlords are required to ensure the fire safety of their tenants as well as offer protection against carbon monoxide poisoning. Under the new safety laws relevant landlords must ensure that:

- A smoke alarm is equipped on each storey of the premises on which there is a room used wholly or partly as living accommodation;
- A carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room of the premises which is used wholly or partly as living accommodation and contains a solid fuel burning combustion appliance; and
- Checks are made by or on behalf of the landlord to ensure that each prescribed alarm is in proper working order on the day the tenancy begins if it is a new tenancy - with potential penalties of up to £5,000 if the landlord does not comply.

Automatic fire detection (AFD) and warning systems

BS 5839: part 1, section 6 contains recommendations for regular, routine testing of AFD systems as follows:

Grade A systems

- Routine testing – at least one detector or call point in each zone should be tested weekly to ensure correct operation of the system. Any defect should be recorded in the log book and action taken to correct it.
- Routine maintenance – a six-monthly service should be carried out by a competent person, usually a specialist alarm engineer, under a maintenance contract. It entails a full test to ensure compliance as specified in with BS 5839: part 1, section 6. It should be recorded in the logbook and a periodic inspection and test certificate issued.

Grade D and E systems

- Routine testing – these systems should be tested every month by use of the test button on the smoke alarm.
- Routine maintenance – all alarms should be cleaned periodically in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

All systems

- It is recommended that all detectors should be tested at least once a year to ensure that they respond to smoke. Tests should not involve the use of open flame or any form of smoke or non-specific aerosol that could contaminate the detection chamber or the electronics of the detector. Suitable specific test aerosols are available. The test is usually carried out by a specialist alarm engineer under a maintenance contract and should be recorded in the logbook, with a periodic inspection and test certificate issued.

Please note: It is recognised that the above arrangements represent the ideal. While they may be possible in buildings with a resident landlord or a dedicated caretaker or housekeeper, in most situations for premises covered by this guide such arrangements may be impracticable. Where this proves to be the case tenants should be given clear instructions on how to test grade D or E alarms within their dwelling using the test button, along with clear recording and reporting instructions for any faults or false alarms on the system. Grade A systems are more specialist and resident testing will be inappropriate unless there is a trained individual in the property. Clear fault and false alarm reporting arrangements should be put in place, and the responsible person or his/her agent should respond to reports at the earliest opportunity.

Escape routes

- Escape routes must be free from obstruction at all times, and regular checks should be made to guarantee this;
- there should be no free storage on the escape routes;
- there should be no trip hazards such as trailing electrical leads or worn carpets;
- all doors should be close fitting as designed. Fire doors should never be propped or wedged open. Any damage to fire doors should be noted and repaired. Any damaged or missing smoke seals must be replaced like-for-like.

Artificial lighting

Conventional staircase lighting must be working properly at all times. Any blown bulbs should be replaced and all switches should be working. If timer switches are fitted then the duration should be checked and adjusted if necessary

Information and training

Each occupier should be given specific advice on fire prevention and fire safety in the home. This should be provided at the start of each new tenancy and reviewed periodically. Suitable advice can be found in annex one of BS 5588: part 12, Advice to occupiers of domestic residential buildings, and advice is also available from local fire and rescue authorities.

Information should include:

- An explanation of the escape routes, particularly where secondary means of escape is provided;
- How the fire detection and alarm system operates and what to do if it activates;
- How and when to re-set the fire alarm system;

- If extinguishers or fire blankets are provided, training in their application and safe use;
- Avoidance of false alarms;
- How and when to call the fire brigade;
- How to report defects;
- The importance of maintaining clear escape routes, free of storage;
- The importance of keeping fire doors closed, not propped or wedged open;
- Smoking and cooking safety;
- Gas safety advice;
- Safe storage and disposal of refuse; and
- The safe use of escape windows where appropriate.