

Freedom of Information request: Reference number FOI2026/00584

Date of request: 21st May 2026

Request:

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and/or Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

I am seeking information relating to Bruce House a residential building managed by A2Dominion Housing Group.

Please provide, where held, information for the past five years relating to:

1. The number of incidents, emergency call-outs, operational attendances, or fire brigade mobilisations to Bruce House.

2. A breakdown of the reasons for attendance, where available, including:

- fire alarm activations;
- smoke incidents;
- lift rescues or lift entrapments;
- flooding or water ingress incidents;
- electrical concerns;
- communal obstruction concerns;
- welfare concerns;
- any other recorded attendance categories.

3. Any available incident summaries, operational logs, or records relating to repeat attendance at the building.

4. Details of any inspections, audits, operational visits, or fire safety assessments undertaken at the building.

5. Details of any fire safety deficiencies, recommendations, enforcement activity, informal notifications, or concerns identified in relation to:

- communal escape routes;
- obstructions within communal areas;
- lift reliability affecting evacuation;
- fire doors;
- smoke ventilation;
- compartmentation;
- damp, flooding, water ingress, or deterioration affecting fire safety.

6. Any correspondence between the London Fire Brigade and:

- A2Dominion Housing Group;
- Harrow Council;

relating to fire safety or operational concerns at Bruce House.

7. Any policies or operational guidance used by the London Fire Brigade when assessing:

- lift outages and evacuation risk;
- communal obstruction risks;
- repeat attendance patterns at residential buildings.

If the requested information cannot be provided in full, please provide as much information as possible within the statutory cost limit.

I would prefer the information in electronic format where available.

Response:

Further to your request, for questions 1 to 3, the answers can be found in the table below. The information available below is found in the LFB *Address Lookup* database. There are no detailed summaries of the incidents.

With regards to questions 4 to 6, the Fire Safety team was contacted for any information pertaining to Bruce House, Harrow, HA1 2FW. They do not hold any Fire Safety audit reports, correspondence or evacuation strategies for this address.

For question 7, policies in relation to *Shut in lift* (PN663) and *Fires in Communal areas* (GN84) are below.

We have dealt with your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. For more information about this process please see the guidance we publish about making a request on our website: <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about-us/transparency/request-information-from-us/>

Type	Address	Date	Description	Job type	Status
Special Service	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	12/06/2026	To able bodied person not in distress	Release from lift car - To able bodied person not in distress	
False Alarm	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	29/05/2026	AFA		
False Alarm	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	26/02/2026	AFA		
False Alarm	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	04/07/2025	AFA		
False Alarm	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	28/04/2025	AFA		
Fire	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	28/12/2024	Primary Fire		
False Alarm	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	10/05/2024	AFA		
Special Service	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	11/12/2023	Make Safe/Isolate Supply	Water Leak Within Building - Make Safe/Isolate Supply	
False Alarm	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	06/11/2023	AFA		
False Alarm	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	23/10/2023	AFA		

False Alarm	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	21/01/2023	False alarm - Good intent		
HFSV	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	10/08/2022	Full	Full	Visit Cancelled - Unable to Contact
HFSV	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	31/03/2022	Full	Full	Visit Completed
HFSV	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	05/07/2021	Full	Full	Visit Cancelled - Client Relocated
Fire	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	23/03/2021	Primary Fire		
Special Service	BRUCE HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PLACE, GREENHILL, HARROW, HA1 2FW	10/01/2021	To able bodied person not in distress	Release from lift car - To able bodied person not in distress	

Policy | Procedure



Shut in lift – attendance reduction policy

New policy number: **663**
 Old instruction number:
 Issue date: **17 July 2009**
 Reviewed as current: **15 January 2024**
 Owner: **Assistant Commissioner, Fire Stations**
 Responsible work team: **Central Operations**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document details the policy for reducing the number of attendances to release persons shut in lifts. Appendix 1 provides background information to the policy.
- 1.2 The policy has three main components:
 - (a) Borough and area level engagement with the lift owners to encourage them to improve maintenance and provide a suitable release service.
 - (b) Call filtering by Brigade Control to reduce the number of calls that we attend and the number of attendances made as an emergency.
 - (c) Charging the lift owners for non-emergency lift releases at premises where we repeatedly attend shut in lift incidents. This aims to provide an incentive for lift owners to improve lift maintenance and release arrangements.
- 1.3 This policy gives details of these three components. A summary of each component and the main responsibilities of participants are given in the main body of the policy and more detail is given in the appendices.
- 1.4 Information about the shut in lift policy available to the public can be found on the London Fire website at <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/ReducingLiftCalls.asp>.

2 Owner engagement

- 2.1 The area DACs will ensure that borough commanders and area staff work together to encourage lift owners to improve their maintenance and release arrangements but the Brigade will not enter into any commercial agreements with a lift owner for the provision of routine (non-emergency) lift release.
- 2.2 Area staff and borough commanders will work towards reducing the number of 'Shut in Lifts' calls by:
 - (a) Identifying high call premises.
 - (b) Identifying the owners of high call premises. Use and maintain a lift owner database for each area. A list of the unidentified owner 3+ call premises can be sent to borough commanders so that they can help identify the owners.
 - (c) Contacting high call owners and encouraging them to reduce their calls. This would usually be arranged by the borough commander.
 - (d) Recording the contact with the lift owners. Contact at borough level should be recorded and copied to the area team.
- 2.3 The Head of Data and Improvement will provide borough commanders and area staff with statistical data to help them identify the high call premises. The current definition of a high call premises is a building where we made three or more lift releases within the previous twelve months.

3 Mobilising and call filtering

- 3.1 Appendix 2 details the mobilising policy. Call filtering aims to reduce the number of attendances made and the number made as an emergency. Call filtering involves Brigade Control officers questioning the caller to determine:

- (a) If the lift occupant is likely to be seriously ill (a medical emergency¹) in which case the Brigade will immediately respond to make an emergency attendance.
 - (b) If no one is in imminent danger and the Brigade is told that the lift owner's routine release arrangements are not available or do not exist, we will then attend at normal road speed. The Brigade does this in order to prevent a possible future emergency.
 - (c) If no one is in imminent danger and the Brigade is told that there are other arrangements available to make the release, in which case it does not attend.
- 3.2 The meaning of "seriously ill" is open to interpretation on a case by case basis but any illness that requires immediate medical treatment (e.g. an ambulance) would come into this category. If the lift occupant cannot be contacted or the urgency of the situation is in doubt then the control officer will default to the emergency mobilisation. The policy does not identify an acceptable length of time for someone to be shut in a lift. The length of time that a person is confined in the lift is not, on its own, reason to send a Brigade attendance.
- 3.3 The Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Control at Brigade Control will monitor the application of the policy by control officers and send a report to the Deputy Commissioner, Operations as required.

4 Charging

- 4.1 Appendix 3 details the charging policy. Under the existing rules, we are entitled to recover costs from building or lift owners for attending non-emergency call outs. We are not required to attend incidents where a person is shut in a lift but not in any immediate physical or medical danger. We should only be called in an emergency. The scheme was introduced in 2009 to tackle the growing number of incidents we attended. A charge will apply when we attend three or more non-emergency shut in lift incidents, at the same building, within 12 months.
- 4.2 The LFB will charge a fee² as above on those occasions where we release someone from a lift unless it was also an emergency (involving serious illness or injury and is recorded on the Incident Management System (IMS) as "lift release to medical case").
- 4.3 Once a premises has become chargeable all subsequent chargeable lift releases will generate an invoice to the lift owner or operator. If the number of chargeable lift releases at a chargeable premises reduces to two or less calls in the previous twelve months and the owner has set up suitable alternative release arrangements then the LFB may waive that particular charge.
- 4.4 Charging will be administered in each area by staff from within the area administrative teams. The charging administrators will use data supplied by the Head of Data and Improvement to help establish who should be charged. Corporate Services will send out the invoices and will, along with the General Counsel to the Commissioner, as appropriate, be responsible for debt recovery.

5 Action by attending operational crews

- 5.1 Crews will carry out their normal actions as required by their operational policies. At the incident they will gather information for subsequent input into the IMS. The information in IMS will be

¹ The relevant definition of 'emergency' contained in Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 is, "an event or situation that causes or is likely to cause:

(a) one or more individuals to die, be seriously injured or become seriously ill, or
 (b) serious harm to the environment (including the life and health of plants and animals)."

A person being shut in a lift is usually an inconvenience not an emergency unless there are some additional factors that make the situation meet the definition above.

² The fee is the Brigade's special services charge – Policy number 402 – charging for special service incidents..

used as the basis for the charging process and crews must take due care that the IMS information is input correctly. Crews may be asked (through their borough commanders) to gather contact information about the premises owner.

- 5.2 Crews should be familiar with the outline of the charging policy as they may be asked questions by members of the public. The public can be directed to the London Fire Brigade website or Area Team for further information.
- 5.3 When ordered to a non-emergency mobilisation the appliance should proceed without delay but at normal road speed without blue lights or sirens. On arrival, whether an emergency mobilisation or not, the incident commander will carry out a dynamic risk assessment to determine the level of risk and the appropriate actions.
- 5.4 A non-emergency attendance can be changed to an emergency attendance by the incident commander if this can be justified based on other information received from Brigade Control or any other source. Incident commanders are reminded that their powers (for example, to force entry) are limited at non-emergency incidents.
- 5.5 All operational staff attending shut in lift incidents should be aware of Policy number 977 – All incident considerations and PN978 – Utilities and fuel and be applying it consistently. The policy states that where the power supply to a lift is shut down in order to deal with the incident, a tag form 5288 should be attached on or as near as possible to the main valve/switch of the supply shutdown using the tie provided or string from station stock.

6 Action by the Business Intelligence Team

- 6.1 The Head of Data and Improvement will ensure that on a twice monthly basis the Business Intelligence Team will gather call information from the previous twelve months and apply the charging criteria. They will make this information available to the area teams in the agreed format.
- 6.2 The Business Intelligence Team will monitor the outcomes of the policy and send a report to the Deputy Commissioner, Operations as required. This report will include:
 - The number of calls recorded as NSIL (not attended), B2E (emergency attendances) and B2NE (non-emergency attendances) including those that end up being recorded as false alarms, "no actions" or other incident type.
 - The number of lift releases made with breakdown into their types (child, medical case, etc).
 - Number of lift releases and charges for each premises; with a comparison of the number of lift releases from premises that made one, two or more releases.
 - Comparison of the above data by time period (year, quarter, month) and location (area, borough, station and watch) as appropriate.
 - Shut in lift call handling time by Brigade Control.
 - Attendance times – emergency and non-emergency lift attendance comparison.
 - Issues arising from the policy.

7 Action by area teams

- 7.1 The area DACs will ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for administering owner engagement and charging in their area. The Area Teams are responsible for confirming that a charge is due to a particular owner. Where necessary, the SW Area will coordinate activities that are not covered by individual areas; this is covered in "Central monitoring" below.
- 7.2 Area Teams will:
 - (a) Input charge details into the Purchase Invoice Management System (PIMS).

- (b) Keep borough commanders informed of contact with lift owners in their borough.
 - (c) Maintain a record of all premises whose ownership has been identified and contact details of the owners.
 - (d) Maintain a record of all significant contact with lift owners and copy that information to the South West Area team (Central coordination).
 - (e) Maintain a record of the charges that have been identified, paid, waived and cancelled with details of the premises and owner.
 - (f) Help coordinate the identification of the ownership of premises and the sending of letters (if appropriate) to the owners of premises that have had three or more calls in the previous twelve months.
 - (g) Be a source of information about this policy both internally and to the public.
 - (h) If a lift owner applies for a waiver, determine whether to waive the charge and send a letter to this effect to the lift owner.
- 7.3 Area Teams will provide progress reports to their area DAC and Deputy Commissioner, Operations as required. The report will include:
- Number of charges identified (by the Business Intelligence Team), invoiced, received, waived and cancelled by month, borough, area and owner.
 - The number of lift releases and charges per lift owner.
 - Details of contact with lift owners over the previous twelve months.
 - Proportion of 3+ premises with an identified owner by area and borough.
 - Issues arising from the policy.
- 7.4 Where a lift owner appeals against the judgement of the Area Team a person nominated by the area DAC will consider the case and the South West Area team (Central coordination) will be informed.

8 Corporate services directorate

8.1 The Corporate services directorate will:

- Send out invoices.
- Monitor the administration of the charging process carried out by the Area Teams.
- Deal with lift owners who have not paid their charge within the required time.
- Inform the Area Team involved and the South West Area Team of any late payment.

9 Central monitoring

- 9.1 The Deputy Commissioner, Operations has arranged for central monitoring to be the responsibility of the area DAC of the South West Area. The South West Area DAC will ensure that arrangements are in place to:
- Provide a central contact point for lift policy related issues.
 - Provide coordination of support departments (General Counsel, Comms, etc) for the lift policy.
 - Monitor the lift policy performance and outcomes.
 - Maintain a log of significant events related to the lift policy.
 - Arrange a regular meeting (frequency to be determined by the AC) to consider progress and best practise. To include; Area Teams, Business Intelligence Team, Brigade Control and Corporate Services.

- Provide the Deputy Commissioner, Operations with information to inform decision making.

Appendix 1 – Lift policy background

The Brigade is not under a duty to attend lift incidents but has the power, under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to take action it considers appropriate if a situation is likely to cause one or more individuals to die or become injured or to provide services to any person or for any purpose that the Brigade thinks is appropriate. The LFB will only attend non-emergency shut in lift incidents if there is no one else available to carry out the release. It does this to prevent a situation that might cause an emergency, either from untrained people trying to make the release or to prevent a person in the lift being in danger from prolonged confinement in the lift.

As part of the London Safety Plan (LSP4) the Brigade approved the introduction of call filtering and charging in order to reduce the number of attendances at shut in lift (SIL) incidents. In 1966 the Brigade attended just 935 SIL incidents (less than 3 a day). In 2008/9 the Brigade made over 14,000 lift releases (about 40 a day). When it started to attend these calls it did so in good faith that it was providing a public service but the Brigade is now finding that some lift owners are using its services instead of having adequate maintenance and release arrangements.

A reduction in SIL incidents will lead to more time being available for emergency calls, training and community safety and any associated reduction of travelling will lead to:

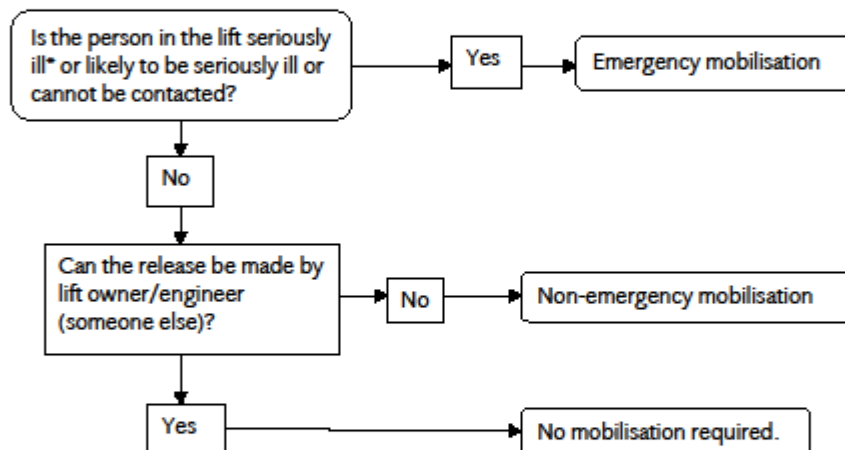
- (a) A reduction in pollution (exhaust fumes, noise).
- (b) A decrease in fuel costs.
- (c) A reduction in the risk of injury and damage due to vehicle accidents.

Appendix 2 – Mobilising policy

There are three outcomes following receipt of call to person shut in lift:

- (a) Emergency Mobilisation;
A person in the lift is seriously ill, likely to be seriously ill or cannot be contacted.
- (b) Non-Emergency Mobilisation;
Release cannot be made by lift engineer or someone else responsible for the lift and none of the circumstances in (a) above apply.
- (c) No Mobilisation;
Release can be made by a lift engineer or someone else responsible for the lift and none of the circumstances in (a) above apply.

These outcomes are illustrated in the flow chart below



* The meaning of "seriously ill" is open to interpretation on a case by case basis, but any condition that requires immediate medical treatment (e.g. where an ambulance would be required to attend) comes into this category.

The length of time that a person is confined in the lift is not, on its own, reason to send a LFB attendance.

Brigade Control officers will question the caller to gather information. The questions will vary according to the circumstances and there is no set script. As a general rule, they will try to avoid asking leading questions; for example, "Are you seriously ill?" The person in the lift should have the opportunity to raise the alarm about their state of health either to the caller or directly to the Control officer.

Appendix 3 – Details of charging process

Introduction

The aim of charging lift owners is to reduce the number of shut in lift calls that are attended. The LFB is not trying to use charges as a means of income generation. The LFB will be called to release people from lifts if the lift release arrangements are not available or do not exist. If suitable lift release arrangements do not exist we want to encourage the owner to put alternative arrangements in place – the charge is part of that encouragement.

The power to charge comes from the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. This enables the LFB to recover costs for releasing people from lifts. There is no power to charge if at the incident we also extinguish fire or protect life and property in the event of fire or we render emergency medical assistance or for mobilising to a shut in lift and finding another incident type the LFB has chosen to limit the instances that it charges. This has been done to limit the impact of charging on LFB administrative resources and to focus its impact on the owners of high call premises. A charge will apply when we attend three or more non-emergency shut in lift incidents, at the same building, within 12 months.

Once a premises has become chargeable all subsequent chargeable lift releases will generate an invoice to the lift owner.

The decision to limit the charge to a building rather than an individual lift, lift owner or estate is based on the ease of owner identification for the LFB. The actual lift involved is not usually recorded on IMS. The definition of an estate is not clear or consistent and is more likely to involve multiple owners. It is assumed that the owner of the building will also be the owner of the lift. When this is not the case, this will be noted for that building by the relevant area team.

IMS

Charging is based on the information recorded on IMS by the attending crew. The outcomes to a mobilisation to a SIL incident are:

Chargeable

- (a) Lift release to able bodied person not in distress – person ten or more years old.
- (b) Lift release to person in distress – a person in distress released from a lift (no ambulance called).
- (c) Lift release to child – a child under ten years old released from the lift.

Not chargeable

- (d) False alarm good intent – no action by Brigade. The IC has evidence that we were called because someone thought there was a person shut in a lift but they were not.
- (e) False alarm malicious – no action by Brigade. The IC has evidence that that we were called because someone wanted to maliciously deceive us.
- (f) Special service no action – A special service incident attended where the Brigade took no action, except a standby, e.g. mobilised to release a person shut in a lift, on arrival, the person had been released by others.
- (g) Lift release to medical case – A seriously ill person requiring an ambulance released from a lift. This is an emergency.
- (h) All other outcomes are not chargeable under this policy.

Appendix 3

The identification of a building on IMS is primarily done by its postcode. This can cause errors when two or more buildings share a postcode but this is unlikely with the size and type of building that we regularly attend. With large multi-storey residential buildings the more common problem is that they have more than one postcode. It is particularly important to avoid errors that would increase the number of charges received by a lift owner.

Area teams will use the information provided by the Business Intelligence Team and their records of lift ownership to identify the lift owner. They will then enter the required details onto the PIMS system.

The Corporate Services Department will:

- Monitor the administration of the charging process carried out by the area teams.
- Deal with lift owners who have not paid their charge within the required time.
- Inform the Area team involved and the South West Area team of any late payment.

If invoices are cancelled due to incorrect data entered into IMS then area teams should inform the Business Intelligence Team so that the IMS entry can be amended.

In some case, we may make lift releases even though suitable alternative arrangements were in place and lift breakdown is rare. If this appears to be the case then the charge can be waived; the owner has already taken suitable steps to prevent us being called and there is no value in further encouragement. The waiver process is initiated by a lift owner applying for a waiver as detailed on our website.

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	15/01/2024	SDIA	23/10/2023	HSWIA	16/10/2023	RA	NA
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 3	Footnote 2, removed the charge for the special service incidents and added a link to the PN402 – charging for special service incidents.	20/05/2019
Throughout	Policy reviewed as current, no changes. Broken hyperlinks removed.	15/01/2024
Throughout	Cross references to cancelled PN106 replaced with PN977 and PN978.	27/03/2024
Throughout	References to to "Head of IM" changed to "Head of Data and Improvement" and references to IM or Information Management changed to "the Business Intelligence Team".	15/10/2025

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Lifts	

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification

**Fire Safety Guidance Note:
Fires in Communal Areas
- Information for External Partners**

GN84

Version: 3, 01 August 2023

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The London Fire Commissioner (the Commissioner) is the fire and rescue authority for London. The Commissioner is responsible for enforcing the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, as amended by the Fire Safety Act 2021, (The Order) in London.

This Guidance Note, published by the Commissioner's Fire Investigation Unit provides information for both responsible persons, residents, and other interested parties on the danger of fires in the communal areas of multi-occupied residential buildings.

This Note is one of a series produced by the Commissioner to provide advice on various aspects of fire safety. If you require any further guidance on the advice given or require advice on another topic please telephone or visit your local Fire Safety Office (telephone 020 8555 1200 and ask for your nearest Fire Safety Office) or visit the London Fire Brigade web site at <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk>.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document has been prepared by the LFB Prevention and Protection department; to show how relatively small fires in communal areas can rapidly develop, put the residents in danger, cause significant damage and result in a major cost to the housing provider/insurer. In London, during 2022, there were 281 fires that involved a communal area.
- 1.2 Although fire safety within communal areas has improved over the years, there remains concern with the storage of combustible items in these areas. Of particular concern is the storage and charging of electric bikes and scooters.
- 1.3 The economic cost of fire can be hard to appreciate. Table 11 in the DCLG report (3/2011 – The economic cost of fire, estimates for 2008) cited the average cost of fire in a domestic dwelling as £48,092 in London. When the potential costs of mass displacement, re-housing and repairs are factored in, as well as inflation, this figure could prove to be a conservative estimate.

2 Summary of incidents

- 2.1 All common areas of multi-occupied residential buildings are subject to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended) and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022. These require the Responsible Person to take general fire precautions to keep occupants safe from fire. Failure to comply with fire safety legislation can result in enforcement action being taken against the Responsible Person, and possible prosecution proceedings where occupants have been exposed to the risk of death or serious injury in the event of a fire.
- 2.2 Over recent years, the Fire Investigation Team has attended a range of incidents where stored items such as prams or discarded/unwanted items such as household furnishings or rubbish etc. have been involved in a fire. In recent years the storage of e-bikes, e-scooters and the like have increased the number and intensity of fires. Case studies 1-4 below, describe fires involving these Electronic Powered Personal Vehicles (EPPV).
- 2.3 In other cases, the cause of these fires has often been arson. In one recent case, a serial arsonist was 'at work' for over four years in different blocks in a borough. The fires are made worse due to the materials being burnt, as there are often plastics and synthetic materials which create high volumes of poisonous and acrid smoke.

3 Taking steps to prevent this problem

- 3.1 It is recognised that the storage of items in communal areas is a problem that can be hard to monitor and resolve. However, this document is put forward to generate awareness and guidance to motivate work to mitigate the risk.
- 3.2 As many communal areas are used for escape purposes in case of fire, these should be free from combustible materials and obstructions. This would ensure limited ignition sources and sources of fuel. The Home Office guidance on [fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats guide, Part E](#) expands on these issues. It recommends either a managed or zero tolerance approach to storage in these areas because of the risk to persons regarding being able to escape, the risk of fire in common areas and the subsequent risk of death or injury from fire. The most appropriate approach to take will depend upon the specific risks and circumstances within your building.
- 3.3 This approach is also appropriate to any shared accommodation, including flats, sheltered accommodation, houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), bedsits etc., which have previously been converted from a house or other type of use.

4 What am I required to do as a responsible person or resident?

What am I required to do as a responsible person?

- 4.1 The management of common parts and escape routes is essential to ensure occupants can escape safely from the premises in the event of a fire.
- 4.2 The Regulatory Reform (fire safety) Order (as amended) places a responsibility on the person in control of a premises, known as the "Responsible Person" to:
- Carry out a fire risk assessment which must focus on the safety in case of fire of all persons lawfully on the premises.
 - Consider persons at special risk, such as disabled people and children.
- 4.3 The fire risk assessment must consider the means of escape in event of fire. These means of escape must be:
- Kept clear of combustibles and obstructions.
 - Be checked on a regular basis to ensure this is the case.
- 4.4 These actions will reduce the potential for accidental fires to start and it also significantly reduces the threat of deliberate fires.
- 4.5 Where necessary it may be required to enforce covenants or tenants' agreements.
- 4.6 The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 require the Responsible Person to provide fire safety instructions to residents and display these instructions clearly in their building's communal areas (or any conspicuous part of the building) and share directly with residents when they move into the building.
- 4.7 The Equality Act 2010 (the '2010' Act) has a provision to prevent indirect discrimination based on relevant protected characteristics, such as sex, age, or disability. However, the '2010' Act does allow such indirect discrimination where it is shown to be a "proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim". Fire safety in multi-occupied residential buildings can be considered as a legitimate aim meaning the 2010 Act does not specifically allow for the storage of items such as prams and/or mobility scooters in the common areas nor does it supersede the requirements of fire safety legislation for managing fire risk. The storage of any items in the common parts must be

considered as part of the fire risk assessment and detailed in any fire safety policies for the premises.

- 4.8 For further information on the application on the Equalities Act 2010 in relation to the common parts of multi-occupied residential buildings specialist legal advice should be sought.

What am I required to do as a resident?

- 4.9 Your actions should not hinder the landlord in fulfilling their requirements under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (as amended) to maintain and manage the means of escape and keep common areas free from combustibles and obstructions.
- 4.10 It is essential that escape routes are kept completely clear of items of furniture, prams, buggies, rubbish, clothes drying facilities, bicycles etc.
- 4.11 Nothing should be allowed to accumulate in the escape route that would hinder the safe evacuation of residents and visitors in the event of a fire.
- 4.12 Prior to any items being stored in the escape routes, agreement should be sought through the landlord and the fire risk assessment reviewed to assess suitability. Not doing so could result in lease and/or tenancy being enforced up to and including the agreement being revoked by the courts.
- 4.13 Check your home's safe using our simple Home Fire Safety Checker tool – [click here](#) to access.
- 4.14 Our tool allows you to carry out a thorough check of your home in only a few minutes. It's simple and practical – giving you specific fire safety advice for your family and your home.

5 Case study examples

Example 1 – Electric bike and associated lithium-ion battery pack fire in communal hallway.

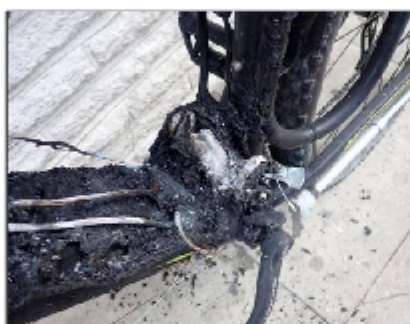


5.1 Three fire engines attended a fire which occurred in a mid-terraced shop and dwellings of three floors. Hard wired smoke detectors were fitted to the flats and common areas. The shop had a single entrance at street level. The residential flats had a single communal entrance at street level that opened to a hallway. Two doors led off the hallway, one to a ground floor flat, and one that opened to a staircase that accessed a flat which occupied the first and second floors.

5.2 The fire was discovered, and the fire brigade called when a resident heard the lithium-ion batteries of their converted e-bike fail and catch fire.

5.3 On arrival the fire brigade found the hallway smoke logged and the battery pack of the e-bike on the floor smoking. Firefighters removed the bike to the street (Seen in image right) and immersed the batteries in a bucket of water. The fire damaged the hallway, as seen in the images above.

5.4 Two adult females and one adult male were rescued from a flat roof at the rear of the property. One adult male and one adult female were rescued from the rear garden, but luckily, there were no reported injuries at this incident.



5.5 Fire investigation attended the scene, the cause of this fire has been recorded as the failure of lithium-ion batteries.

5.6 A Senior Fire Safety Officer attended the scene and found minor fire safety issues around fire doors, escape route, fire safety management and detection and warning – factors which could potentially have increased the risk to residents had the fire been more severe.

Example 2 – Electric bike fire in hallway of an HMO.

5.7 A fire occurred in a purpose-built block of flats of three floors.

5.8 The affected flat was on the first floor and was used as a house of Multiple Occupation. It contained three lockable bedrooms, a shared bathroom and kitchen, all accessed from one hallway.





5.9 The fire was discovered by the occupants when a smoke alarm actuated, and they could hear the fire. On opening their bedroom door, they found a fire in the hallway (as seen in the images). Some of the occupants then escaped out of the first-floor bedroom window with the remaining occupants leaving by the front door. On arrival firefighters saw smoke issuing from a side window and a group of people standing in the street. Firefighters extinguished the fire and searched the property.

- 5.10 The flat sustained significant damage by fire heat and smoke. Four adult males were removed to hospital suffering smoke inhalation with one further adult male treated on scene. Fire investigation attended the scene, the cause of this fire has been recorded as accidental due to failure of lithium-ion batteries from an e-bike on charge. A Senior Fire Safety Officer attended the scene.



Example 3 – Electric bike fire in the communal hallway of a converted house into an HMO.



5.11 Four fire engines attended a fire which occurred in an extended end of terraced house of two floors and a loft conversion. The house had been converted into 10 individual bedrooms, with shared communal facilities. The property had hard wired smoke detectors fitted to the common areas and the flats; several detector heads had been removed from the bedrooms.

- 5.12 The fire was discovered when residents smelled burning. Residents were unable to leave the house via the front door due to smoke logging in the hallway, seven residents escaped by kicking out the windows.
- 5.13 On arrival the fire brigade found two residents on the canopy of the bay window and rescued them using a short extension ladder and extinguished the fire. The ground and first floor were significantly damaged by fire, as seen in the images.





5.14 Four adult males suffered smoke inhalation and injuries from escaping via the first-floor windows. Three adults were taken to hospital while one was discharged at the scene, 10 residents needed to be rehoused.

5.15 Fire investigation attended the scene, the origin of the fire was located around an e-bike. A four-gang extension lead and transformer from a charger were also located in this area and were sampled by fire investigation.

5.16 A Senior Fire Safety Officer attended the scene and found fire safety issues.



Example 4 – Small buggy set alight in an entrance lobby of a modern low-rise block of flats.

5.17 The image to the right shows a small buggy which was set alight in an entrance area to a low-rise residential block of flats. There was apparently very little additional fuel loading e.g. no toys and extra blankets.

5.18 The damage to the ceiling, plaster work, décor and electrics in the area would have resulted in a significant repair cost. It was lucky that no one came out of their flats during the fire, as there would have been significant amounts of toxic smoke and hot fire gases.



- 5.19 In another incident, a baby buggy was set alight on the ground floor of a common stairway area. Smoke spread up the stairway cutting off the single staircase escape from the upper floors.
- 5.20 The occupants were advised to stay in their flats until the fire was extinguished, but 21 persons needed to be assisted to the ground floor by the Brigade. Two people escaped from the upper floor before arrival of the Brigade suffering from smoke inhalation and needed medical attention in hospital.
- 5.21 There was a history of problems relating to leaving the buggy on the ground floor, as the owner had difficulties carrying it up to top floor flat.

Example 5 – Small cupboard in internal hallway in a high-rise block of flats. Domestic items belonging to one of the residents were stored in it.



5.22 The three images on this example relate to a fire which occurred in a common lobby shared by four flats on the second floor of a high-rise block. The seat of the fire was within a small cupboard (approximately 30-50cm wide) used to house services such as drainage and telephone cables. The cupboard had been filled with old clothes and electrical items (*example image left*).

5.23 One door to the lobby had been wedged open leading to the stairwell becoming heavily smoke logged.

- 5.24 Several occupants of flats on the upper floors called the Fire Brigade concerned that they were trapped and received fire survival guidance from Brigade control.
- 5.25 The image to the right shows the cupboard with some fire debris removed. There was not a huge amount of material involved, considering the extensive smoke damage, as seen in the image below.



5.26 The fire was extinguished by breathing apparatus crews using a single main jet.

5.27 The fire was confined to the area of origin with the remainder of the lobby and corridor being damaged by heat and smoke.

5.28 In this case, there was significant life risk, but thankfully there were no casualties.



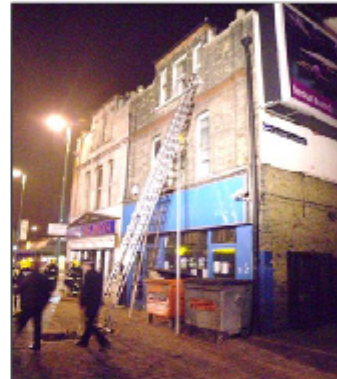
Example 6 – Papers & stored goods in a mixed-use semi-detached building of three floors.

- 5.29 In this next example, the fire occurred in an interlinked semi-detached building of three floors, circa 1900s. The ground floor was used as offices, with the adjoining property's ground floor being used as a restaurant. The two properties were connected at ground and first floor levels. The upper floors were used as a house of multiple occupation. The building was undergoing a refurbishment. It is believed that there were nine people living in the building.



5.30 The fire started in the hallway on the ground floor offices at the base of the internal staircase to the flats (as shown in image to the left) and damaged approximately 50% of the ground floor. The remainder of the ground floor was damaged by heat and smoke, with the rest of the building damaged by smoke. The fire was attended by four fire engines.

5.31 There were seven people in the



building at the time of the fire. All were unable to escape from the building. Two were rescued from a first-floor window by a road contractor, who put the bucket of his JCB up to the window prior to the arrival of the Brigade. The other five were rescued from a second-floor window by the Brigade with a ladder (as seen in image to the right, with Brigade ladder in situ). All seven were removed to hospital by the London Ambulance Service, suffering from smoke inhalation.

5.32 All seven occupants had to be rehoused. The cause of the fire was believed to be deliberate.

Example 7 – Mattress and chair in lobby area of high-rise block of 10 floors.

- 5.33 This fire occurred in the 6th floor communal area of a residential block of 10 floors. The deliberate fire involved two separate areas of fire, a mattress in the lift lobby and an upholstered chair in the adjacent stairwell within the same firefighting shaft.
- 5.34 There was very little lateral smoke spread, however there was considerable smoke damage to the stairway between the 6th floor and the 10th (top) floor. Six fire engines and a turntable ladder attended.
- 5.35 A 30-year-old female and a four year old child were trapped in a flat at 6th floor level and received fire survival guidance from Brigade control. Both were rescued by a Breathing Apparatus crew and subsequently examined at the scene by the Ambulance Service and treated for smoke inhalation.



Image left: View of communal area with the remains of the mattress in foreground. Note damage to ceiling and walls, doors and wall panels.

Image right: View from other side of doors. Note extensive damage to ceiling, walls, doors and wall panels. Light fitting and electrical wiring indicated by red arrow also damaged by fire.



Example 8 – Papers on a small sofa which was left in a ground floor communal area of a low-rise block of flats.

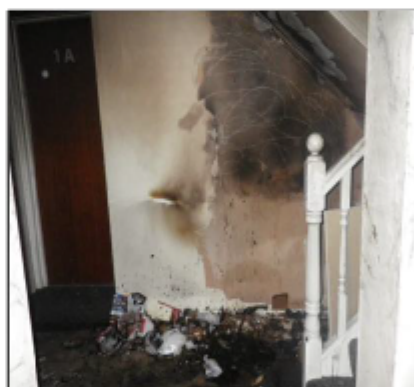
- 5.36 Two fire engines attended this fire in the communal hallway of flats in a low-rise residential building. Occupants were unable to escape due to the location of the fire and smoke spread within the building.
- 5.37 The fire is believed to be caused by the careless disposal of smoking materials into paper (envelopes magazines and cardboard) which were on top of an abandoned two seat sofa in the communal area of the ground floor stairwell (image below), the sofa was only partially damaged, however:



- A one-year-old child needed to be rescued from a 2nd floor window using a ladder.
- Two children and one adult female were rescued from a first-floor window using a short extension ladder.
- Two adult males and one adult female were rescued from the ground floor by crews wearing breathing apparatus.
- One adult male and one adult female were rescued from internal staircase by crews wearing breathing apparatus.
- One adult male and one adult female were rescued by crews wearing breathing apparatus from the first floor and led to safety via the internal staircase.
- Two children and one adult were removed to hospital suffering from the effects of smoke inhalation.

5.38 Crews wearing breathing apparatus extinguished the fire using main and hose reel jets. 25% of the communal stairwell from ground to second floor was damaged by fire.

5.39 The image (to right) shows the area of origin where the sofa was. Note that the structural damage was not particularly severe in this case, but the smoke travel resulted in the rescues and injuries detailed above.



Example 9 – Motor scooter (similar fuel loading to mobility scooter) left in ground floor entrance lobby of low-rise block of flats.

5.40 The following example involved a small motor scooter in a communal area. What is notable is the extensive damage not only from smoke, but also from the heat. There was apparently relatively little petrol in the scooter; most of the fuel loading was from the plastic body panelling.



View of front communal entrance



*View going in through the communal entrance.
Note light fittings have melted*



*Clear burn pattern behind the scooter
Note: rear tyre is still intact*



*Stairwell opposite the scooter. Note: spalled
plaster from the stairwell has fallen onto the
stairs*



*Image to left: View upstairs showing extensive
heat and smoke damage.*

6 Bibliography

Detailed guidance on the various standards referred to in this guidance note may be obtained from the following bibliography. You can also obtain fire safety advice on other subjects by visiting the London Fire Brigade's website at www.london-fire.gov.uk.

The publications can be obtained from the following addresses:-

AVAILABLE FROM	TITLE
The Stationery Office (Mail, Telephone, Fax & Internet Orders)	Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats
TSO Orders/Post Cash Dept PO Box 29 Norwich NR3 1GN	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-in-purpose-built-blocks-of-flats
Telephone: 0870 600 5522 Fax orders: 0870 600 5533	
Web: http://www.tso.co.uk	

The above publications are current at the time of preparation of this Guidance Note (see date in footer).

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