



## Putting your safety first

**Since the day of the tragic Grenfell Tower fire, lots of work has been going on to ensure fire safety at our high-rise blocks is the best it can possibly be.**

We are actively working with the fire service, the council, the mayor and other landlords to maximise fire safety in high-rise blocks.

Please remember, serious fires in high-rise buildings are rare and the block is designed to keep you safe if a fire does break out.

### **If a fire starts...**

**...in your flat or a neighbouring flat:** Get everyone out. Don't try to put the fire out. Close the door and leave the building. Don't use the lift. Call 999 and ask for the fire service.

If you have health problems that stop you from leaving your flat quickly, please arrange for a Safe and Well visit from the fire service. Ring 0800 555 815 or visit the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service website.

**...in any other flat in the building:** The block is designed to keep you safe if a fire breaks out anywhere else in the building. Things like fire walls, floors and doors stop fire spreading. This is called 'compartmentation'.

You should normally stay in your flat, close all windows and doors and ring 999. Only leave if you feel unsafe, or if your flat is directly affected by heat or smoke, or if the fire service tells you to.

# Cladding checks

Northwards manages 20 high-rise blocks on behalf of the council. There's rainscreen cladding on five blocks – Mossbrook, Humphries, Vauxhall, Roach and Whitebeck courts. No other blocks have rainscreen cladding on them.

## **The cladding used on these blocks is different to the cladding used on Grenfell Tower.**

As you know, rainscreen cladding from high-rise blocks all over the country is being tested. The testing organisation, BRE, is only checking rainscreen cladding which is the same as that used on Grenfell Tower.

Because the cladding used on Northwards-managed high-rise blocks is different from the Grenfell cladding, it has not yet been called for testing and may not be. We are ready and willing to co-operate should testing be required.



## Your questions answered

### **Q When will the next fire safety check be done at my block?**

**A** We have a legal duty to carry out fire risk assessments (FRA) at every high-rise block every year. To reassure everyone after the London fire, each FRA is being independently revisited, whether it's due or not. This started the week of 10 July. This will also include the four blocks managed by the Avro Hollows TMO with support from Northwards. As well as these reviews, the fire service is inspecting all high-rise blocks.

### **Q Should I stay in my flat if there's a fire in my block?**

**A** If the fire's in your flat or a directly neighbouring flat, get out, stay out and dial 999. If it's elsewhere in the block, the flats are designed to keep you safe for up to 60 minutes while the firefighters deal with any fire. You should stay in your flat with your doors and windows closed, unless the fire service tells you to leave. According to the fire service, there have been 330 flat fires in Greater Manchester in the past three years. Each one was contained within the flat and did not spread to other flats.

### **Q Why are there no fire alarms on landings?**

**A** Because we advise you to stay in your flat if there's a fire elsewhere in the block, it doesn't make sense to also have fire alarms which would cause people to try to get out. The fire service will help to get people out, should they feel it necessary.

### **Q Are you considering installing sprinklers?**

**A** There's a sprinkler system at Whitebeck Court because it's an extra care facility. In common with other social landlords, we're looking at the practicalities and costs of having sprinklers in other blocks. Any decision about installing them would be taken jointly by the council and Northwards with advice from the fire service.

### **Q Is the planned renovation of the Charlestown blocks still going ahead?**

**A** This work, which includes some rainscreen cladding, is on hold until we know the outcome of the Grenfell fire investigation. We'll be in touch with residents as soon as we have more news.

### **Q Will you be providing fire extinguishers in flats?**

**A** No. If there's a fire in your flat, the advice is to get out and call the fire service out. You could lose vital seconds by fighting the fire.

# Fire prevention – what we're doing

**Lots of things are already in place to reduce the risk of a fire starting and to prevent one spreading in your block:**

- The blocks are designed to stop fire spreading from one flat to another because of things like fire walls and fire doors.
- Smoke alarms in all flats give the earliest possible warning of a fire in your home. You should check the alarm every week by pressing the test button.
- All our blocks have been checked for fire safety risks but we're revisiting each one following the London fire.

**We're also:**

- Carrying out extra checks for fire safety risks, such as discarded rubbish and items left on landings.
- Bringing forward checks for all fire detection and alarm systems.
- Bringing forward checks for all dry risers. These are the water pipes the fire service uses for firefighting.
- Encouraging you to book a Safe and Well visit from the fire service if you have any fire safety concerns. Ring 0800 555 815 or visit the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service website.



# How you can do your bit...

**Landings and corridors...** Must be kept clear. This is a condition of your tenancy.

**Rubbish...** Could burn or make it more difficult for you to get out. If you find rubbish dumped in a hallway, put it down the chute if it fits, and tell your caretaker. If it won't fit, tell your caretaker and they will arrange for it to be dealt with. Don't just ignore it.

**Bulky items...** The council collects large items, like old mattresses. Visit [www.manchester.gov.uk](http://www.manchester.gov.uk) or call 0161 234 5004 to order a collection.

**Dangerous materials...** Don't keep things in your home that burn easily. No bottled gas, paraffin heaters or liquid fuel. This includes in communal areas.

**Electrical items...** Don't overload plug sockets. It can lead to overheating.

**The kitchen...** Most home fires start in the kitchen. Chip pans are very dangerous – never leave the kitchen when the pan is on. Ring us on 03000 123 123 and we'll swap your chip pan for a deep fat fryer.

**Reporting faults...** If you have an emergency repair that could be a fire risk, such as a faulty plug socket, report it immediately on 03000 123 123, day or night.

**At night...** Switch off electrical items, make sure cigarettes are fully put out, and shut all doors. Don't smoke in bed!

**Preventing deliberate fires...** You can help by keeping communal areas clear of rubbish, being careful about who you let in the building, and reporting anything suspicious to your caretaker, the police or us on 03000 123 123.

**Please call us immediately on 03000 123 123 if:**

- you see any damaged fire safety equipment in your block
- neighbours are propping fire doors open
- your smoke alarm doesn't work

# Rubbish disposal

Northwards encourages recycling in high-rise blocks and our Waste and Recycling Team can help with this. Use the recycling bins for glass, cans and paper. The chute is for non-recyclable rubbish only. Keep the chute area clear at all times.

If you have bulky items, visit [www.manchester.gov.uk](http://www.manchester.gov.uk) or call 0161 234 5004 (8am-8pm) to arrange a collection.

**Dumping rubbish and blocking the bin chute is a fire hazard and breach of your tenancy agreement.**



This picture shows what can happen when rubbish is left by a bin chute. A discarded cigarette started the fire.

If rubbish won't go down the chute, speak to your caretaker or ring 03000 123 123.

Your landing and communal areas are checked regularly to make sure they are safe. Northwards has a legal duty to carry out these checks and take action when rules are broken.

## Safety in action

**There was a fire in a flat in Lincoln Court in August 2013.**

The fire caused severe damage to the flat and windows but, as you can see from this picture, it was contained.

The outside of the building was smoke damaged but did not ignite. This was later repainted. The fire service did not need to evacuate the whole block.



## Test your smoke alarm every week

Having a working smoke alarm gives you and your family vital seconds to escape a fire in your home.

Your risk of dying in a fire is four times greater if you don't have a working smoke alarm.

**Please test your smoke alarm every week by pressing the test button.**

Your front door is also important for fire safety. It is a fire door. It keeps you and your neighbours safe.

Never prop it open or remove the metal arm or chain which closes it. Please let us know if your front door is faulty or damaged.

You can report any problems with your smoke alarm or front door at [www.northwardshousing.co.uk](http://www.northwardshousing.co.uk) or by calling 03000 123 123.

## Gas safety checks

To keep you safe, we check your gas appliances every year. We need to do this by law. It's FREE and we check your smoke alarm too.

We'll write to you with an appointment. Just get in touch if you need to change it. This check safeguards you from carbon monoxide poisoning. Your safety depends on it!

We also check your electrics every five years. This is to make sure your home meets electrical safety regulations. It also helps to protect you from fires caused by faulty electrics.