



a guide to safety  
and security

## Gas safety

Faulty gas or solid fuel equipment can be dangerous. It leaks an odourless gas called carbon monoxide, which if breathed in, can kill.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can happen if:

- The appliance was not installed correctly.
- The equipment isn't working properly.
- The appliance has not been checked for safety and maintained regularly.
- There isn't enough fresh air in the room.
- Your chimney or flue gets blocked up.
- Unqualified people put in or service the appliance.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include tiredness or drowsiness, headache, chest pains and stomach pains.

If you notice yellow or orange flames, soot or stains around the appliance or your pilot light often blows out, this could mean a problem – make sure you let us know immediately.

If you think a gas appliance in your home isn't working properly, don't use it. Never cover up appliances or block the vents. And don't cover or block the outside flues.

## Servicing

To keep you safe, we will service all homes with gas or solid fuel at least once a year. Please make sure you let the engineer in to do this important job.

This work is essential to ensure your appliance works safely and efficiently and we would ask that you make every effort to allow access to the engineer when your service is due. If you fail to allow access we may have to consider legal action to gain access to your property.

## Gas leaks

If you smell gas, in the property you should contact us and then phone the emergency freephone gas number (all numbers are in section 15 of this handbook).

- Put out cigarettes.
- Open doors and windows if you can, to let the gas escape.
- Turn off the gas supply at the meter.
- **Don't** use any naked flames.
- **Don't** use electrical switches as the spark could ignite the gas.

## Electrical safety

If your electricity isn't working and you think an appliance caused the problem:

- Disconnect that piece of equipment.
- If your home has a fuse box, turn off the mains switch and check that the right fuses have been used.
- If your home has circuit breakers rather than a fuse box, turn off the mains and reset the circuit. Don't keep replacing a fuse, or resetting the circuit breakers without correcting the fault.



If the problems continue and you can't find the fault, please contact us. If you get an electric shock from either a switch or a socket, please contact us immediately. You must not use the switch or socket, and you should turn the circuit off at the fuse box or circuit breaker.



Our top tips for electrical safety are:

- Limit the number of items that you plug into one socket.
- Don't have more than 13 amps on each socket.
- Check flexes and plugs regularly to make sure that they are not damaged.
- If fuses keep blowing or you get an electric shock from an appliance, get a qualified electrician to check the equipment for you. If it's an appliance that we have provided, please contact us immediately.

## Fire safety

Whilst it is not possible to cover all eventualities the following is useful advice to follow to make you and your family safer:

- Do not block your hall or stairways. It is important that you and your family can make unrestricted use of these in emergencies.
- Make sure that you are able to unlock your outside doors easily for exit in an emergency.
- Make sure that you and your family including small children have a plan in place in case there is a fire at your home. Decide on a meeting place a safe distance from your home. Make sure that everyone (including children) understands that they should go and wait there if there is a fire.
- Test your smoke alarms every month.
- Have a family escape plan and practice it with your family. This will increase your chances of escaping the fire safely. Go over the rules with your family and practice the fire drills. This will help everyone to remember them in case of a fire emergency.

If you discover a fire, you should:

- Alert everyone in your home, and get them out by the safest route.
- Feel all doors before opening. If they are hot, leave them closed.
- Close all doors behind you.
- Call the fire brigade on 999.
- Alert your neighbours.
- Stay out until the fire brigade give you the all clear to go back in.

Don't try to put a fire out, unless you're sure you can do this safely and quickly.

## Smoke alarms

If you have a smoke alarm in your home, test it monthly to make sure that it is working. You must also keep it clean and dust-free, or it may not work if there is a real fire.

## Testing and maintenance

You should press the test button on your smoke alarm once a month to ensure that it is working.



When the low battery warning signal sounds, you should replace the battery immediately. The low battery beep will sound every minute for up to 30 days when the battery needs replacing.

It is your responsibility to ensure regular cleaning of the detector and changing of batteries, where applicable. If you think your smoke alarm is faulty, please contact us.



## Smoke alarms for the 'Hard of Hearing'

Working with Social Care Direct, we can arrange for an initial assessment for any tenant who may have a hearing impairment and to make a recommendation to the fire service to provide a specialist smoke alarm.

For more information please contact your Estate Services Officer.

## Asbestos

Asbestos materials are safe if left undisturbed. If you have received permission from us to carry out alterations and you require advice before you start any work on materials, such as artex on ceilings or walls or in heating cupboards, etc, please contact us.

## Security in your home

Here are some useful security tips:

- Keep your doors and windows locked.
- If an unknown visitor calls at your home, always check their identity. All Cestria staff and partners carry identification. Never let anyone in unless you are sure who they are.
- If your house is empty, use timer lights or ask a friend or relative to pop in and check on it.
- If you're going away, remember to cancel your milk, newspapers and any other deliveries.
- If you'll be away from some time, ask the Post Office to hold your mail, or get a friend to collect your post.
- Ask someone you can trust, such as a relative or neighbour, to keep an eye on your home whilst you're away.

In the event of false alarms, e.g. food being burnt, doors and windows should be opened and fresh air fanned in front of the detector to remove the smoke from the chamber.

- Never leave your keys under the doormat or in any other obvious place.
- Always lock your garden shed.
- Never leave ladders lying around.
- Log the serial numbers of your personal belongings, especially televisions, videos, DVDs, cameras, hi-fi systems and computers.
- Think about security marking your belongings.



## When you are away

When you are away from your home, try to make it look occupied:

- Leave the lights on in the evening (but not just the hall or landing lights). Get a neighbour to come in and switch them on, or use an automatic time switch.
- Remember to cancel papers, milk and other regular deliveries before going on holiday.
- Arrange for a neighbour or friend to cut your grass and generally keep an eye on your home while you are away.
- Never leave valuables and easily transportable items like video units or car keys where they can be seen from the windows.
- Hide small valuable items like jewellery or, even better, take them to your bank before going on holiday.



## Leaving your home empty in cold weather

If you leave your home empty when the weather might turn cold, and there is a danger of hard frost, you should protect your home against water damage from burst pipes by keeping your heating on a low heat. If however you are going away for a long period of time, you should contact us to determine if it is advisable to drain your water supply.

## Frost damage

Frost can cause serious damage to pipes, cisterns, sinks and basins because water expands when it freezes in cold weather.

At the beginning of a cold spell, you should:

- Keep your home as warm as you can;
- Make sure your pipes are lagged; and
- Know where the main water control tap or stop valve is, and how to turn it off. If it doesn't work properly, ask us to repair it.



## Burst pipes

If the water has been leaking through an electrical light or ceiling rose, do not switch on the light, call us immediately.

If you discover a burst pipe:

- Turn off the water immediately at the stop valve.
- Turn on all the taps to drain the water as quickly as possible from the system, and stop it flooding your home.
- Find out where the water is coming from.
- Put a container underneath to catch any leaks.
- Contact us for advice before you turn on the water.



## Returning home after a long period of time

Turn the stop valve on again and make sure enough water comes out of your taps. This is to check that there is no air in your pipes.

If you have switched on your central heating but the radiators don't get hot, turn the system off and contact us. Make sure that you check the timer is working, and the pilot light is lit, before you call.

If one radiator stays cold or only heats at the bottom, you probably need to bleed the air out with a radiator bleed key.

## General access (roads)

Make sure that you or your visitors do not block emergency services access with parked vehicles.



# SPECIAL ADVICE FOR BLOCKS OF FLATS

## Communal areas

In the interests of your safety and the safety of others living in your flats please:

- Do not block your fire escape route.
- Do not place rubbish, discarded furniture, or other items that could catch fire easily, in communal areas (e.g.. stairs, corridors, building entrances, landings, etc).
- Ensure that fire doors are kept closed.
- Know your building and ensure that you are familiar with the location of exit stairways and doors.

## If fire breaks out in your flat

- Leave the room at once and close the door behind you
- Alert everyone in your flat.
- Leave your flat. When everyone is out close the front door.
- Do not use balconies.
- Alert your neighbours.
- Leave the building by the staircase that is designed for such an emergency. Do not use the lift. Dial 999 for the Fire Service and tell them which floor the fire is on.
- Do not attempt to go back into the building until the Fire Service tells you that it is safe to do so.

# **LOCATE THE POSITION OF YOUR STOPCOCK, FUSE BOX ETC IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY**

**Write down the positions here and keep this page safe**

**Keep a torch in a handy place**

**Stopcock**

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**Electrical Consumer Unit (Fuse Box)**

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**Gas Tap (Emergency Control Handle)**

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**Residual Current Device (Trip Switch)**

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**Boiler**

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**Water Tank**

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**We are committed to providing fair opportunity to access information.**

**If you would like information in another language or format, please call us on Freephone 0800 587 0001.**

**Also available in:**



Visual impairment formats



**[www.cestria.org](http://www.cestria.org)**