



Fire Safety on Golden Lane Estate Information for Residents

Since the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, we have been asked a number of questions by residents. Cripplegate Members held a meeting on 26 June and more questions emerged from this. Members and officers think it would be useful for everyone on the estate to see these questions, and our answers.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Estate Office. Staff there will be happy to come to your home and show you your fire escape route if you have any doubts about how to evacuate the building if your home is affected by a fire. If you have more general concerns or questions about fire safety, then please email these to housingfiresafety@cityoflondon.gov.uk. You will receive an acknowledgement within 2 working days. An officer will be allocated to look into your concerns and you will receive a full response as early as possible, but definitely within 10 working days.

Anyone wishing to talk to senior managers about fire safety matters can attend a drop-in session in the Community Centre on 24 July, 6.00-8.00pm.

Q How often does the City carry out fire checks on its residential blocks?

A Previously, our policy has been to commission independent fire risk assessments every three years, and to have these reviewed annually, by trained staff. However, we have now decided to have new fire risk assessments done by independent specialists every year. Frankham Risk Management Services have been commissioned to carry out new risk assessments on all our blocks, starting this month.

All Estate Managers and Estate Officers are trained in fire risk management and carry out monthly and weekly checks to address any hazards that emerge during the year. All our cleaners have been trained to identify potential fire risk and are expected to report anything they see as part of their day to day duties.

Q Can I see the most recent Fire Risk Assessment for my block?

A Yes. Links to fire risk assessments for each of the City's residential blocks can be found on the City of London website, on the page for the estate. If you do not have internet access, please ask your estate team to print a copy for you.

Q How can I keep up to date with information about fire safety on the estate?

A New pages are being set up on the City of London website and can be found at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/housingfiresafety. All information will be posted there and updated regularly. Any new questions posed at the Drop In Event on 24 July will be added to these Q&As and posted there. There will also be links to other useful information.

Anyone who does not have internet access can ask the estate staff to print off any updates for them.

As projects to improve the fire measures of buildings are progressed, updates on these will be included in the monthly Major Projects Update. If there are developments that all residents must be made aware of, we will write to all households. But, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Q What should we do if a fire breaks out in our building? The current advice is confusing and we don't know whether we should evacuate or stay put.

A The advice given by the London Fire Brigade is that people are usually safer staying in their home BUT that they should leave if fire or smoke is affecting their property and it is safe for them to do so. This is the advice we give in all our literature. If you do have to evacuate, there are standard notices in our blocks telling you what to do. We understand that this has confused some people and will look at the wording of those notices to try and make it clearer.

The advice we, and the Fire Service give *if there is a fire in your property* is:

- Alert everyone in your property;
- Leave, shutting all doors, without locking them;
- If possible, alert neighbouring properties;
- Leave the building;
- Call 999 and wait for the fire service to attend. If safe to do so, wait by the entrance of the building to meet the fire service and to prevent anyone else entering the building.

Q Does everyone know how to get out of the building if they need to?

A Fire escape routes are clearly signposted and emergency lighting is regularly checked. We do advise all households to make themselves familiar with fire escape routes. If you are unsure of yours, then please contact your estate office and someone will visit you to show you.

Q Is the City proposing to introduce fire drills for residents across its estates?

A The fire service does not recommend carrying out fire drills on estates as this is extremely difficult to manage. Instead, we are offering to make a home visit to any household requesting it and to show residents their escape route.

Q What do you do to identify and help elderly and vulnerable people in an emergency?

A We are proactive in trying to identify all residents who may need help in an emergency situation, and we make their details available to the emergency services. We also work very closely with our social services colleagues, to share information and to make sure people are supported. Our Tenancy Support Team is currently speaking to all vulnerable residents

about fire safety, and our estate staff are currently knocking on doors to offer advice and reassurance to anyone wanting it.

However, it is difficult for us to know all the people who live on our estates, especially in leasehold and privately let properties. If you have anyone in your household who might need extra help in an emergency, then please let us know straight away so that we can update our records and let the emergency services know. This is vital.

Q Does the fire service have access to information about vulnerable people?

A Yes. Every estate has a fire box, accessible only to the emergency services, and this contains information on flats where there may be people needing greater support. This is updated whenever we are made aware of a change, by the resident, their family, Adult Social Care, the City Police or any other agency.

Q I've noticed that some of my neighbours have lots of things outside their front door and these could be flammable or trip people up if they were running from a fire. What are you doing about this?

A We have a clear protocol, agreed with the fire service, about things that can be placed outside flats. The area outside a flat is not private – it is communal space, and it is essential that items left there are restricted, so they do not cause hazards in an emergency situation. We have always worked with residents to address these issues when they arise, but we will now be taking a much firmer approach to any areas identified as breaching the guidance. We would also ask that residents do not leave combustible materials such as cardboard and paper outside their flats. Rubbish should be left outside doors only on the day of collection. If you see anything outside a flat that should not be there, please report this to the estate office, in confidence.

Q Should residents keep fire extinguishers in their kitchens?

A We do not advise this as different types of extinguishers are needed for different fires. Fire blankets are also not recommended. We do advise that heat detectors be fitted in kitchens and smoke detectors in halls. The London Fire Brigade offer free home safety visits which we encourage residents to take up.

Q How fire resistant are our front doors and is the City going to replace them?

A Most of the doors on our properties are original, and have around 20 minutes resistance to fire. We are carrying out a feasibility study to survey all doors and plan a programme to replace all those which have resistance of under 30 minutes. Priority will be given to doors in tower blocks and we will inform residents as soon as we know the extent of the programme and when it will start.

Q Do you plan to install sprinkler systems?

A This is something we are investigating. We need to find out exactly what is possible for each building, and what the cost would be. We are getting this information and expect to be able to come back to residents in September.

Q What about fire detection and smoke ventilation in communal areas?

A Again, we are investigating this, as we need to make sure that anything installed is tamper-proof and does not result in false call-outs for the fire service. We will report back to residents in September.

Q Shouldn't every home have a smoke alarm?

A Yes. All City of London tenants' homes are currently part of a programme of electrical testing and rewiring. As part of that programme, hard-wired fire detectors are being installed.

London Fire Brigade advise that people who live in high rise properties should have a working smoke alarm. They can help with this – more information can be found at <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/SafetyAtHome.asp> or by calling 0800 028 4428.

Q Will leaseholders be expected to pay for the improvements and changes made as a result of improved fire safety recommendations?

A We have a duty to charge leaseholders for any work for which they are liable. We will know more about charges for the fire safety works when we have completed our feasibility studies and will update residents.

Q What measures does the City take to ensure gas safety?

We have a fully comprehensive gas servicing contract and carry out annual inspections to all tenanted properties. We currently achieve 99% access. In addition, we offer the same service to leaseholders at the same cost (cheaper than British Gas equivalent).

Q What about pipes outside the flats?

A Pipes running between the meter and a property are included in the landlord gas checks and servicing each year. Pipes going into the meters are the responsibility of Cadent, who manage them on behalf of National Grid. They have confirmed that most of the underground pipework on Golden Lane has been replaced. We have asked them to do a safety check on the other pipes that are their responsibility and they will be visiting the estate on 11 July to carry this out and to do any necessary work. If they need access to any homes they will contact the residents direct.

Q The new COLPAI development includes a high rise residential block. What safety measures have been included in the plans?

The design of the COLPAI development is in its early stage and as it develops all relevant safety measures will be included in the buildings. The whole development will have a sprinkler system installed. Furthermore a review of the early stage of the design has been carried out by a fire consultant-Bureau Veritas who has made a number of recommendations that have been incorporated into the design.

Q Is the recycling area safe? What if someone set fire to the cardboard or paper there?

A This was looked at by the London Fire Brigade last year and a sprinkler system was installed in that area over six months ago.

Q If there was a fire at Great Arthur House, would the Podium take the weight of the fire engines?

A This has been raised in the past and we have consulted with the London Fire Brigade. They have confirmed that they would not need access to the Podium in the event of a fire. They are satisfied that there is adequate access for fire vehicles in an emergency without using the Podium.

Q Is there any combustible cladding on Great Arthur House?

A No, there is no combustible cladding on Great Arthur House. We identified that a thin (30cm) strip of strengthening material, running the length of one side and part way up the other side, contained insulation material which was not compliant with our specification. Also the corner strips were found to contain a very small amount of non-compliant material. As a precaution, all non-compliant material was removed immediately. All other materials used on the building meet our specification.

Q How did this insulation material come to be used on the building?

A We are investigating why something was used on the building which did not meet our specification and will share our findings with residents when we know.

Q The government has announced that the material on many tower blocks is failing their tests. What is the result for Great Arthur House cladding?

A The government are only testing Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding, as this is the type that presents a potential risk. We have sent samples of the Great Arthur House cladding and they have confirmed that it is not ACM.

Q Does Great Arthur House contain sufficient fire breaks to stop a fire spreading from floor to floor? I can't see any fire breaks in the new cladding.

A Yes. There are fire breaks at each floor and at each wall between the flats. These have been inspected by Building Control and the Clerk of Works and they are satisfied.

Q How are major projects like Great Arthur House recladding monitored? Is there a Clerk of Works? Does Building Control make regular inspections and, if so, can we see the reports for Great Arthur House?

A An architect from John Robertson Architects (JRA) is carrying out a Clerk of Works role on the Great Arthur House project and is visiting site at least once a week and producing weekly reports. In addition, senior staff from JRA are making additional regular inspections. JRA also carry out a formal review process of all information produced by the sub-contractors prior to installation on site. Building Control are continuing to make regular inspections but do not produce written reports of these, however they will issue a certificate at the completion of the project confirming that the project complies with Building Regulations.

Q How do you measure satisfaction after the project?

A We carry out a survey of resident satisfaction after each project. On Great Arthur House, we carried out this survey on the completion of the western side, so that lessons could be learned and incorporated into the rest of the project. There is a contractual requirement for any defects arising within 12 months of the completion date to be made good at the contractor's expense.

Q Wooden flues have been removed at Great Arthur House – has this compromised fire safety in any way?

A There are no wooden flues. The areas referred to are the surrounds to the flues which have been replaced and will shortly be redecorated. Fire safety has not been compromised in any way.

Q The doors from the external staircases at Great Arthur House have gaps at the top. Surely this is unsafe if these are fire or smoke control doors?

A Great Arthur House has been inspected within the last two weeks by both the London Fire Brigade and the City's Fire Safety Advisor. They have confirmed that these are not intended to be fire or smoke control doors, but are there simply to provide some weather protection. Therefore, the ventilation gaps do not matter. The fire doors are those which lead to the lift lobbies, and they are all satisfactory.

The questions and answers will be placed on the City of London website at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/housingfiresafety and will be updated as more information becomes available. If you have any questions about fire safety, then please email these to housingfiresafety@cityoflondon.gov.uk.