

Legislation Update -

Fire Safety for Landlords

This technical guidance note covers the changes in fire safety regulations for landlords since October 2016

Key Changes in Fire Safety Regulations for Landlords:

New legislation came into force on the 1st October 2015 for Private Landlords in England regarding smoke and Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms.

Below we've summarised the key points you need to be aware of:

- A smoke alarm must be fitted on every storey where there is a room used (whether wholly or partly) as living accommodation.
- A CO (Carbon Monoxide) alarm must be fitted in every room with a solid fuel burning appliance, where that room is used wholly or partly as living accommodation.
- Alarms must be tested and working on the start of each tenancy
- Penalties of up to £5,000 per property for those that flaunt the rule. It is outlined that the relevant Local Authority will enforce and can apply remedial notices if they have 'reasonable ground to believe' that a property/landlord is not in compliance with the regulations.

It should be noted that:

- There is no grace period
- The regulations do not stipulate the type of alarm to be installed however the Q&A booklet states:
'Landlords should make an informed decision and choose the best alarms for their properties and tenant'.
- Although the legislation refers only to solid fuel burning appliances in relation to CO alarms, the Q&A booklet states in relation to gas appliances that:
'...we would expect and encourage reputable landlords to ensure that working carbon monoxide alarms are installed in rooms with these [gas appliances].'

Why this change in legislation?

The statistics below, drawn from a variety of source help to explain the governments campaign to tackle the imbalance between protection levels for private tenants versus the rest of the housing sector.

- **Smoke alarm coverage in privately rented accommodation stands at 83%. This is the lowest of any housing type.**

Source Official Impact Assessment conducted by government.

- **Between April 2013 and March 2014, 97 people died and 1900 were injured in domestic fires affecting properties where no smoke alarm was present.**

Source: Fire Statistic Great Britain 2013-14

- **The risk of a CO related incident occurring in the private rental sector is three times greater than the risk for other housing types.**

Source: Gas Safety Trust Carbon Monoxide Incident Report 2012

- **A study of 1758 emergency department patients displaying symptoms that could be associated with CO poisoning found that only 16% had a CO alarm installed in their home.**

Source: BMJ (formerly British Medical Journal) Article 2012

What Should I do Next?

If you're a landlord and are unsure about how best to go about ensuring your tenants are compliant with fire safety legislation, please feel free to give us a call and we'll be glad to help. There are a number of options you could look at for your properties, including:

- Battery Powered CO (Carbon Monoxide) Alarms.
- Mains interlinked detectors that take a power supply from a lighting circuit, have a battery backup and interlink with all other alarm devices in the building to ensure the alarm is raised properly.
- Install CO detectors into an existing fire detection system onsite.

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