



# Safety in Residential Accommodation

The following details highlight some of the hazards and risks that may exist in residential care homes and other residential buildings such as hostels. They are by no means exhaustive and will vary depending on your particular building. As a starting point use the blank sheet provided in this pack and carry out your own simple risk assessment.

## Main Types of Hazard

**Fire safety hazards due to:**  
Smoking  
Burning fat and grease in cooking appliances.  
  
Faults in electrical system and appliances.

## Managing the Risk

- Ensure all means of escape are properly maintained and kept free from obstruction, unlocked and easy to open.
- Internal doorlocks on residents rooms should be designed to allow staff immediate access.
- Ensure alarms, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors etc. are properly maintained.
- Consider special alarm provision for people with impaired hearing e.g. flashing lights.
- Develop a system for assisting disabled or elderly residents to evacuate the building.
- If possible, devise a smoking policy which limits smoking to designated areas.
- Do not overfill deep fat fryers or leave cooking appliances unattended.
- Ensure that electrical systems are checked regularly and faults reported and repaired immediately.

**Hoists and Lifts**  
Lift malfunction - persons trapped in lift  
  
Lift failure  
  
Trapping hazards

- New lifts should comply with British Standard 5655. Older "homelifts" should be upgraded to meet this standard, where possible.
- Ensure all lifts are serviced regularly and inspected every six months by a competent person.
- Make appropriate arrangements for the safe release of passengers trapped in the lift e.g. train a member of staff.
- To make allowances for the elderly and disabled you may need to alter the door closing mechanisms so that they close more slowly and less forcefully.
- "Stair lifts" should not now be installed in residential care homes and existing stair lifts should be phased out in favour of passenger lifts. If stair lifts are still in use, then their use should be supervised by trained staff.

**Manual Handling**  
Muscular injury due to poor lifting and handling.

- Assess the various lifting operations and risks presented to staff.
- Supply mechanical aids e.g. bath hoists, where practicable.
- Devise safe procedures for lifting heavy loads manually where mechanical aids are unsuitable e.g. define when assistance will be necessary.
- Train staff in safe lifting techniques.



## Hazardous Chemicals & Drugs

Exposure to hazardous substances and clinical waste

Misuse of drugs

- Try to use the “safest” cleaning agents available and where there is a risk, train staff in the safe procedures to be followed.
- Provide protective clothing e.g. gloves, if necessary.
- Ensure all chemicals and drugs are properly labelled and are kept in a secure location.
- Authorise persons who administer drugs.
- Ensure that clinical waste e.g. needles/soiled dressings, is stored separately and is safely disposed of. Contact your local Council for further advice on disposal.
- Devise a procedure for dealing with spillages of clinical waste or hazardous chemicals.

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## Laundry Safety

Electric shock  
Contact with moving parts of machines  
Infection from soiled laundry

- Ensure equipment can be easily isolated.
- Ensure equipment is well maintained.
- Ensure that interlocks are working.
- Ensure no risk of infection from heavily soiled laundry e.g. use a sluice machine.

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## Water Temperatures

Legionnaires Disease

Scalding

- Water tanks and pipework should be designed so that water is not allowed to stand for long periods.
- Ensure tanks are covered, inspected and that the entire system is treated periodically to prevent growth of Legionella bacteria.
- A calorifier should be used to raise water temperature above 60°C.
- The temperature at hot water outlets should not exceed 43°C (use thermostatically controlled mixer valves if necessary).

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## Violence to Staff

- If there is a risk, provide equipment such as panic buttons/alarms.
- Train staff on how to deal with potentially violent situations and what action to take if violence does occur.
- Ensure there is a system for reporting and dealing with violent incidents.

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## Windows/Doors/Stairs

Slips, trips and falls

- Provide sufficient handrails on stairs.
- Avoid doors with strong self closers.
- Supervise entrance doors e.g. buzzer system.
- Fit safety glazing to window surfaces at or below waist level or fit barriers to raise effective height of window sill.
- Fit restraints to any double hung sash windows and to other windows above ground floor level, if necessary.

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## Grounds

The main hazards are associated with use of equipment and pesticides for grounds maintenance and with traffic flow

- All outdoor equipment should be supplied through a circuit protected by a 30 mA RCD.
- Training on storage and use of pesticides should be given.
- Introduce speed restrictions for traffic.

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## Maintenance

People have lost their lives or been seriously injured as a result of accidents during maintenance work e.g. when window cleaning, watering plants, painting, changing light bulbs or servicing lifts etc.

- Develop safe systems of work and/or employ competent contractors for all maintenance work.

### ■ For Further Information:

*HS(G) 104 - Health and Safety in Residential Care Homes*  
Available from HSE Books, PO Box 1999 Sudbury, Suffolk