



Fire Safety in Shared Hallway, Stairwells, Landings and Passages (*shared common areas*).

Introduction

This document sets out PCH's policy on preventing sources of ignition and fire spread in shared common areas and maintaining safe routes of escape in housing types which have shared common areas.

Regulations

PCH will fulfill our responsibilities in line with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This focuses on preventing fires and reducing risks, and places responsibility on us for the safety of everyone using our premises.

Responsibilities

PCH's staff must follow fire safety policies and procedures at all times to ensure fire safety at all our sites. Staff must make sure local fire procedures are implemented and monitored so we continue to comply with the regulations.

Fire risk assessment

PCH have carried out fire risk assessments relating to the structure, fabric and management of all communal areas in accordance with our fire risk assessment procedures. Additionally all fire risk assessments' will be reviewed periodically to ensure continued compliance.

Fire instruction notices

PCH will prominently display appropriate printed fire instruction notices where applicable, giving clear written guidance of the action to be taken upon discovering a fire and/or hearing the alarm.

Management of shared common areas

PCH will adopt a “managed use” policy to minimize the potential of ignition and fire spread within communal areas. The fundamentals of which are -

- All communal areas must be kept clear and free from obstruction at all times.
- All communal areas must be kept free from ignition sources and significant combustible items at all times.
- That a NO SMOKING policy exists in all common areas and is a requirement of law in it's own right.
- That the communal areas of the blocks do not belong to any individual – even the area immediately outside of their front door. In general, tenants do not have the right to store or leave or store anything in the common areas of the building.

The principle of a managed system is that there are some items that will be non-negotiable and efforts will be made to remove them in accordance with PCH procedures should a breach be noted.

Items that are non negotiable will include –

- Mobility scooters/ motor bikes being kept/stored/parked or charged/refueled in communal areas.
- Pushchairs, buggies, prams etc
- Upholstered furniture.
- Bedding or mattresses
- Washing machines, fridges, freezers,
- Washing lines or cloths dryers (within enclosed corridors and staircases)
- Barbecues.
- Bicycles (within enclosed corridors and staircases)
- Fuel containers or gas bottles.
- Portable electrical goods ,TV sets , music players etc
- Shopping trolleys
- Lockers , bookcases,
- General rubbish, black bags of rubbish, wheeled bins, bundles of newspapers or clothing etc.
- Electrical and service cupboards must not be used for storage of any material.
- Unsecured/loose carpet.
- Festive decorations (Christmas trees, lights etc).

Staff will regularly inspect communal areas and take action in accordance with PCH's procedures, should breaches of this policy be identified.

In interpretation of these non-negotiable items common sense should prevail. For example if a mother who lives on the top floor of a block of flats returns to the flat and leaves her pram at the base of the staircase (out of the way in an alcove) goes into her flat for a short while and then returns to go out again , this would be reasonable . However it would be unreasonable for the pram/buggy/bike/scooter etc to be left for long periods of time, over night, or basically left permanently.

Examples of where an exception may be made

- Door mats in good condition and would not constitute a trip hazard..
- Picture/s on wall that are secure to the wall and enclosed in glass/Perspex.
- Plant pots containing real flowers /plants.
- Plant pots containing artificial plants and flowers where the size of the display is “very” limited.
- Furniture made of for example glass, metal, solid wood (i.e. like a church pew or a park bench).

In agreeing any of the above the inclusion of the item should not obstruct the access or egress for residents and fire fighters in the event of a fire.

In terms of those items which may be exempted a judgment will need to be made in terms of its location and potential impact in the event of a fire. For example, what may be accepted in an open balcony may not be acceptable in an enclosed corridor and what may be accepted in an open staircase may not be acceptable in an enclosed staircase.

As a general rule if in your judgment the item seen is un-necessary, a hazard or in general is bringing the tone of the building down then it should be removed.

Equality and diversity

PCH will apply this policy consistently and fairly, and will not discriminate against anyone on grounds of their racial or ethnic origin, disability, gender, religious belief, sexual identity, or any other relevant characteristic.

PCH will make this policy available in other languages and formats on request.

We will carry out an equality impact assessment on this policy, in line with our corporate procedure.

Monitoring and review

We will monitor this policy to ensure it meets good practice and current legislation and will review it in accordance with our review timetable for all policies.