

## **ARHM GOOD PRACTICE NOTE**

### **GAS SAFETY**

#### **Carbon monoxide**

There is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if:

- a gas appliance was poorly installed
- a gas appliance is not working properly
- a gas appliance has not been checked or serviced regularly
- there is not enough fresh air in the room (vents might be covered by residents who are not aware of their necessity for open flued appliances)
- the chimney or flue gets blocked up
- unqualified people are allowed to install or service the appliance.

Carbon monoxide can kill without warning in a matter of hours. You cannot see it, taste it or smell it. Older people are more likely to be particularly susceptible to the effects of the gas. The early symptoms of poisoning include tiredness, drowsiness, headache, chest and stomach pains. Occupants are most vulnerable when asleep.

#### **Gas Safety checks**

Appliances owned by the landlord, such as the warden's accommodation, or communal areas used by residents such as kitchens or lounges, are required to undergo 12-monthly safety checks. The checks must be carried out by a 'Gas Safe' registered gas installer.

Basically, the checks cover the correct operation of each gas appliance and any safety devices. A dated record must be kept, noting any defects identified and action undertaken. There is a standard Landlord's Gas Safety Record form, and residents have the right to their own copy. In the case of gas appliances situated in communal areas, a legible, current gas safety check record should be displayed in a prominent position and the residents made aware of its location. This record should be kept for a minimum of 2 years.

Some management companies have a responsibility under their lease to service and maintain heating appliances which actually belong to the resident. Whilst this is not covered by the regulations, the manager should meet their requirements under the terms of the lease.

Responsibility for safety extends to the maintenance of both installation pipework and appliances. Appliances and installation pipework are to be maintained in a safe condition, so as to prevent risk of injury to people in property or a place of work. This will also include central boiler plant.

Where unsafe appliances are detected Gas Safety Regulations 1998 state that "the responsible person for any premises shall not use an appliance or permit an appliance to be used if at any time he knows or has reason to suspect the appliance is faulty or there is insufficient air for proper combustion". The responsible person is defined as "in relation to any premises, means the occupier

of the premises or, where there is no occupier or the occupier is away, the owner of the premises or any person with the authority for the time being to take appropriate action in relation to any gas fitting therein. "

This could be useful to management companies who are concerned that a faulty appliance belonging to an occupier is still in use.

The purchase and installation of new appliances/flues should be to the latest safety standards.

### **Checks Following Building Works**

A significant range of building works may affect the efficient and safe operation of a gas appliance. This includes work on a chimney, roof or flue, and also work such as the installation of double-glazing or an extractor fan.

If the building works were such that they may have affected the safe condition of any gas appliance or pipework then effective routine maintenance should be carried out, together with those checks made during an annual safety check.

### **Portable Appliances**

A mobile or portable appliance where gas is supplied from a cylinder such as a portable space heater or cooking stove, should undergo effective routine maintenance to the manufacturer's instructions and an annual safety check.

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