

Home Safety - Asbestos



While well-maintained asbestos in your home does not pose a health risk, if any of it has to be removed, or is damaged as part of DIY work in your home, it can be dangerous to the health of your household. That is why it is very important that all Council tenants seek permission from their local area housing office before carrying out any alterations in their home. As part of considering your request for permission your home may be visited and the area where you wish to carry out work inspected by housing services staff to ensure that there is no danger caused by asbestos.



What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the common name given to a group of natural minerals made up of many small fibres.

It was widely used in building materials from 1930 until about 1980, mainly to insulate properties and protect them against fire. Asbestos concrete was also used to make roof slates, rain water gutters, downpipes and decorative plaster finishes. This means that houses and flats built or refurbished in this period may contain some asbestos materials.

Asbestos-containing materials (ACM) are unlikely to have been used in properties built since the mid-1980s, and from 1993 the use of asbestos in most products has been banned.

When is asbestos a problem?

Generally speaking asbestos is not dangerous. It only becomes dangerous if asbestos-containing materials are damaged or deteriorate with age. When damaged asbestos releases tiny fibres into the air. Breathing in these fibres can cause serious damage to the lungs.

Where in my home could I find asbestos?

Asbestos is most commonly found in:

- Facia and soffit boards
- Panels beneath window frames
- Roof felt or lining panels
- Roof sheets or tiles
- Roof cement cold water tank
- Old ventilation pipes
- Textured coatings and ceiling panels
- Hot pipe insulation
- Garage roofs
- Bath panelling
- Garage window lining
- Panels behind fires or heaters
- Fire door panels
- Service ducting
- Partition walls
- Garage rainwater downpipes
- Floor tiles and linoleum in kitchen and bathroom
- Garage facia boards

**What do I do if I find asbestos?**

If you think any material contains asbestos, or if you think your home contains damaged asbestos material, then don't try to deal with it yourself. Contact The Housing Repairs Centre on 0845 30 11 110.

Never drill, sand, saw or disturb any asbestos-containing materials which are in good condition.

Can I remove asbestos from my home?

Sometimes it is necessary to remove asbestos materials, but this work should only be carried out by a contractor with a special licence issued by the Government. They must follow strict regulations to make sure asbestos is removed and disposed of safely.

Home Safety - Gas and Carbon Monoxide



Any gas appliances owned or leased by the Council must be checked for safety annually and serviced when required. To ensure the health and safety of everyone in your household it is essential that you allow the Council's Gas Safe Registered engineers access to your home annually for this check to be carried out. Currently this work is done by WRB Gas Contracts Ltd on behalf of the Council.



If you suspect a gas leak:

- Turn off the gas supply immediately. The main gas on/ off lever is usually next to your gas meter.
- Open windows and doors. This will allow any build up of gas to disperse.
- Don't touch any light switches or plug sockets. An electrical spark from a switch could ignite escaped gas.
- Extinguish all naked flames and remove any sources of ignition. Don't light matches, and do not put out cigarettes.
- Phone National Gas Emergency Service immediately on **0800 111 999**

Under no circumstances turn the gas supply back on until someone from the National Gas Emergency Service has checked it.

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas. CO is produced when carbon-based fuels - such as gas, oil, wood and coal - do not burn properly.

According to the Health & Safety Executive around 20 people die a year from CO poisoning caused by poorly maintained or installed gas appliances and flues. That is why it is so important that you allow the Council's Gas Safe Registered engineers access to your home annually to carry out a maintenance inspection on your gas-fired appliances.

The Council has fitted audible Carbon Monoxide alarms in most of our houses with gas-fired appliances. If your house hasn't been fitted with one of these please contact The Repairs Centre on 0845 30 11 110.

Home Safety - Electricity



Report any electrical faults to The Repairs Centre immediately on 0845 30 11 110.

Be sure you know where to find your mains switch, and how to turn it off. If you are ever in any doubt about electrical safety, switch off.

What should you do if your power goes off?

- Check your trip switch or fuses to make sure there isn't a fault with your wiring or any appliance.
- Check if any neighbours are affected. If they are it is more likely to be a problem with the local network. Contact the Scottish & Southern Energy Emergency line on 0800 300 999 to report a power cut.
- If there is an electrical fault in your home contact The Repairs Centre emergency line on 0845 30 11 110.

Be prepared for a power cut

- Keep a battery-powered or wind-up radio tuned in to your local radio station to keep up-to-date with any announcements.
- Keep a torch with fresh batteries in a place where you can reach it easily, even in the dark.
- If you use other forms of heating and lighting, such as paraffin heaters and candles, don't leave them unattended at any time.
- Switch off appliances and lights, but leave one light on so you know when the power is back.
- If you have elderly or vulnerable neighbours check to make sure they are comfortable.
- If you have been warned in advance that the electricity will be turned off for a period of time boil some water and keep it in a thermos flask. You can use it to make hot drinks, or to fill a hot water bottle if it gets too cold.
- While power is out don't open the freezer door unless you have to - this will help the food inside stay frozen for longer. When the power comes back on, check the food inside and dispose of anything which has defrosted immediately. Food should keep for about eight hours in a freezer without power.

Home Safety - Fire



The Council has installed mains or battery operated smoke detectors in all of our houses. Please ensure that these are maintained regularly.

Battery operated detectors

- Change the battery at least once a year.
- Remember that if it makes intermittent 'beeps' this is a sign that the battery is running low.
- Never leave a battery-operated smoke detector without a battery.
- If you are going away for a few days check that your detector is working.



Mains electric smoke detectors

- Make sure that the mains supply is permanently connected, and check the back-up battery regularly to make sure that it will still work in the event of a power cut.

We will replace the battery in your smoke detector if you are elderly or disabled and don't have a nearby friend or relative who will do this for you. Simply contact your local area housing office and we'll arrange it for you.



Home Fire Safety Visit

Tayside Fire and Rescue offer all residents of Perth and Kinross a free home safety visit to look at all areas of accident and fire risk within your home.

During the visit information is provided on the safe use and disposal of smoking materials, candles, heaters, electric blankets and dangerous substances. Help will also be given to prepare an escape plan for getting out of your home in the event of a fire.

You can contact the service by:

- Freephone telephone number 0300 123 9998
- Text 'Check' to 61611
- Visiting the Tayside Fire and Rescue website

Home Fire Safety Visits are carried out by pre-arranged appointment only, and by uniformed fire fighters from your local station. The fire fighters will be in possession of identification cards.

Home Safety - Security



Most break-ins to private homes are by opportunistic thieves who take advantage of open windows and unlocked doors to steal your personal belongings.

There are simple steps you can take to reduce the chances that your home will be targeted by a thief:

- store all keys, including car keys, out of sight of windows and letterboxes
- install good outside lighting
- leave radios or lights in your house on a timer to give the impression that someone is in
- store valuable items (including passports, driving licences and bank statements) out of view
- hide cash and wallets away
- secure bikes at home by locking them to an immovable object inside a locked shed or garage
- keep ladders and tools stored away; don't leave them outside where they could be used to break into your home
- if you live in a flat block with a door entry system don't 'buzz' people in without checking who they are, and be careful about holding the door open for a stranger when you walk in or out of your building
- never leave a spare key hidden outside. Burglars know all the places to look. They will also check the garage or shed for spare keys to get into your home.
- don't leave windows open or doors unlocked when you are not in your home, even if you've just popped out for a few minutes
- in the summer don't leave your home unsecured while you're out in the back garden, it only takes a thief a few minutes to walk in your front door and back out with your belongings
- if anyone you don't know turns up at your door you should always ask to see their identification before letting them in, if you're still not sure refuse entry it's your home and you don't have to let anyone inside.

Remember that while the Council will insure the building you live in it is your responsibility to make sure that your personal belongings are adequately protected.



Looking for more information?

Check the Perth & Kinross Council website www.pkc.gov.uk or contact any Council office to request a copy of:

- Tenants' Guide on Home Contents Insurance (section 2.4)

Home Safety - Winter Precautions



Sustained periods of cold weather can cause damage to your home. The most likely cause is if household pipes freeze up and burst causing water damage.

There are some simple measures you can take to reduce the risks.



- Check you know how to use the heating system properly, and also where your stop valves are;
- Keep the heat in - fit draught proofing, insulate your home and lag your pipes;
- If you intend to leave your house unoccupied for more than a few days in winter turn off the water and drain the plumbing system. Council tenants can have this done free of charge by contacting The Repairs Centre on 0845 30 11 110;
- If pipes become frozen, and are part of the hot water system, turn off or extinguish the source of heat (immersion heater, gas boiler, coal fire back boiler);
- If a burst occurs turn off the water at the main stop valve in the house, turn on the taps, switch off the boiler, and switch off the immersion or water heating systems (extinguish your coal fire if you use a back boiler);
- Keep your heating on overnight at a low temperature so pipes won't freeze - simply turn your thermostat down to 15 degrees Celsius.

Swift repairs of dripping taps and ball valves can help to prevent freezing pipes, as can salt placed in the waste traps of sinks, baths, basins and WCs. Also, always ensure that all taps are fully off as running taps may cause waste pipes to freeze.

In the event of a burst pipe Council tenants should contact The Repairs Centre on 0845 30 11 110.