Connexus



Fire Safety

Fire safety is one of most important considerations within your home. We are committed to reducing the potential of a fire occurring in our properties and ensuring that there are measures in place to protect people when a fire does happen.

This page contains important information and advice on both communal and domestic fire safety.

Staying safe in your home

Did you know your local fire service in either Hereford or Shropshire can arrange a free home fire safety or fire risk check? To find out more and to download their factsheets take a look at the fire service leaflets **here**.

Need help making an escape plan? Your local fire service can help with this. Contact them to arrange a free home safety fire visit.

- Shropshire Fire Service - **Fire Safety leaflets**
- Hereford & Worcester Fire Service - **Home Fire Safety Advice Page**

A few basic rules to follow to stay safe in your home are:

- Test your smoke alarm every week
- Never leave cooking unattended or get distracted while cooking
- Always ensure cigarettes and candles are fully extinguished at night
- Don't overload electrical sockets or extension leads

- Make sure you know your escape plan and you have no obstacles in your way if you need to use it
- Keep door keys where everyone you live with can find them easily.

Further fire safety advice

Click on the headings below to read more

Fire safety for customers living in multi-storey buildings flats and apartments

In all cases follow the guidance provided in the Fire Action Notices displayed in your block.

If you have any concerns about fire safety or the safety of your building please contact us using the details here.

What we do to keep you safe

- Carry out an annual Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) on all blocks of flats.
- Commission service, maintain and test on fire safety systems within a block such as fire alarms, detection, warning, emergency lighting, automatic ventilation systems, dry risers.
- Routine block inspections
- Use competent staff and contractors to undertake fire safety work in your home.
- Inspect flat fire doors on a regular basis
- Liaise with the local fire and rescue service to ensure they are familiar with the block and its fire measures.
- Keep residents informed about fire safety and provide relevant and up-to-date safety information.
- Fit and maintain fire alarms within your home.

If fire breaks out in your flat

- Leave the room where the fire is straight away. Then close the door
- Tell everyone in your flat and get them to leave.
- Do not stay behind to put the fire out.
- Close the flat entrance door behind you.
- Move as quickly but as safely as you can to exit the building
- Do not use lifts if provided.
- Raise the alarm by using a 'break glass' call point if fitted.
- Wait outside away from the building.
- Call the fire service – dial 999

If fire breaks out in your flat and you cannot escape

- Find a safe room as far as possible within the flat from any fire or smoke (with a window if possible), close the door and use soft materials to block any gaps to stop the smoke.
- Go to a window, shout 'HELP, FIRE' and call 999.
- Be ready to describe where you are and the quickest way for firefighters to reach you.
- Try and stay on the line and act on the advice provided.

If you see or hear of a fire in another part of the building

- Connexus has a 'stay put' policy in place for the majority of general needs and sheltered scheme residential buildings. Such buildings are designed to contain a fire in the flat where it starts. The evacuation procedure is on display in all buildings, and customers and visitors should familiarise themselves with it.
- 'Stay put' means it will usually be safe for you to stay in your own flat if the fire is elsewhere but prepare to evacuate.
- Call the fire service – dial 999
- You must however leave immediately if smoke or heat affects your home or if told to do so by the fire service.

- If you are in doubt - get out!

Do not

- Store gas cylinders, paraffin or other highly flammable liquids in your apartment or shed
- Park or block access to the apartments. Access roads and gates are designed to allow fire appliances to get as close as possible to fight fires
- Wedge doors open. Remove wedges if you find them
- Leave objects on the landings that could be in the way when you try to escape
- Store items in communal areas, this includes recycling boxes provided to you by the local authority, we reserve the right to remove your items from communal areas and charge you costs for removal and disposal.
- Smoke in communal areas including the landing and lifts. It is against the law to do so
- Place candles or tea lights on, or near flammable materials e.g. curtains

If you wish to report cluttered or blocked communal areas, or need any other advice, then please contact us using the details **here**.

Fire safety in communal areas

Your safety is our highest priority and we pride ourselves on maintaining the very highest standards of fire health and safety. With this in mind, we must remind our tenants of their responsibility to maintain communal areas.

Please remember:

- Storage of personal possessions is not allowed in communal areas, including stairwells and corridors. This is to maintain clear escape routes and keep them clear of combustible material.

- You will be requested to remove any personal possessions from communal areas. This includes any recycling boxes you may have been provided by the Local Authority.
- We reserve the right to remove and dispose of any of your possessions which are not removed from communal areas. You will be charged for any costs associated with their removal and disposal.
- If you are concerned about a cluttered or blocked communal area, then it is your responsibility to contact your Housing Officer or Independent Living Coordinator. You can also contact Customer Services by using the details **here**.

Balcony advice to customers

If you have a balcony

We want you to enjoy use of your balcony, but we want you to do this safely. We expect all our customers to take the following simple steps:

- Never use barbecues, chimineas, fire pits, patio heaters or candles on your balcony. Fires caused by these types of items can spread very quickly to the balcony above and below. They could also spread quickly into your property if doors or windows are left open.
- Keep your balcony free of any flammable items and materials. Flammable materials include items such as petrol, solvents, oil based paints real and also avoid a general build up of items stored on your balcony, including storing rubbish and recycling.
- Never store gas cylinders on your balcony. There is a risk they may explode if they are left in the sun, even in winter.
- Do not smoke on a balcony or allow guests to do so. If you do not follow this advice, then it is really important that you stub cigarettes out in a closed metal ashtray. Do not drop cigarettes on or over the side of the balcony, as this can cause a fire.
- Never use or store fireworks on your balcony (or anywhere in your home). If you have fireworks that you no longer want, some fire services will collect

them free of charge and arrange to dispose of them safely.

- Balcony screening/curtains – items such as fabric, bamboo, straw, and rattan or wicker screens are included as combustible materials and are not permitted.
- Electrical items – please don't run extension leads from within your home to operate electrical items, white goods and electrical appliances must not be used on balconies as they are a fire hazard.
- Laundry – drying washing on balconies is permitted during daylight hours, but must not be left unattended and it should not be draped/hung over the balcony railings. When you are not at home, any laundry must be removed from the balcony. This includes airing rugs or carpets.
- Furniture – only furniture designed for use outside should be used.

Garden bonfires/fires/BBQs

Bonfires can be enjoyable, providing warmth and a focal point for gatherings, but they also come with inherent risks.

- Never leave a fire unattended or leave it to smoulder – put it out.
- Only burn dry material.
- Never burn household rubbish, rubber tyres, or anything containing plastic, foam or paint.
- Avoid lighting a fire in unsuitable weather conditions – smoke hangs in the air on damp, still days. If it is too windy, smoke blows into neighbours gardens and windows and across roads.
- Avoid burning when air pollution levels in your area are high or very high.
- Keep your fire away from trees, fences and buildings.
- Never use oil, petrol to light a fire – you could harm yourself and damage the environment.

Safe Use of BBQs

Barbecues can be dangerous if not handled responsibly, they can remain hot for

hours and also give off carbon monoxide fumes for several hours after they go out, so you should never bring them indoors.

- Never use a BBQ including disposables indoors or on a balcony.
- Use the 30 feet rule and ensure that BBQs are placed away from any flammable surface, trees or buildings.
- Don't use petrol or any flammable liquid on your BBQ. Firelighters are a safer option.
- Supervise children and pets around a BBQ both when it's lit and during the cool down.
- Ensure the BBQ is fully out, prior to going indoors or leaving your garden.

Bonfire & Firework safety advice

Whilst firework displays can be great fun, fireworks can be dangerous if they are not used and handled properly. If you live in a house and are planning to put on your own small display please take care to make sure you, your family and your friends stay safe by following these simple guidelines.

Bonfires

It is far safer to attend an organised display than to have a bonfire at home.

If you are planning to have a **small** bonfire in your garden, make sure it is away from sheds, fences, bushes, trees and the property. **Bonfires are not to be lit in communal gardens.**

Hereford fire service advice for bonfire / firework safety

Shropshire fire service advice for bonfire / firework safety

Fireworks

It is important to remember that fireworks are explosives and can represent a danger if not handled correctly. Only category 2 fireworks are suitable for most private gardens.

Before your fireworks display:

- Check the fireworks you buy are CE Marked
- Ensure your display area is free from hazards
- Do not tamper with fireworks
- Read the instructions in daylight
- Warn neighbours, especially the elderly and those with animals, about your display
- A clearly identifiable person should be responsible for the fireworks.

To stay safe during your fireworks display:

- Ensure you have a metal box, with a lid, for the storage of the fireworks
- You should have a torch to double check the instructions
- Keep a bucket of water and/or a garden hose close by in case of emergencies
- You should have a protective hat, eye protection and gloves to avoid any small burns
- Keep a first aid kit close by
- Use a bucket (preferably metal) of soft earth to stick the fireworks in
- Keep your firework storage box closed between uses
- Use a board for flat-bottomed fireworks
- Use proper launchers for rockets
- Light fireworks at arm's length with a taper
- Stand well back and never go back to a lit firework
- Keep children under control
- Do not put fireworks in your pocket
- Throwing a firework is dangerous and illegal: it's a criminal offence to do so in a street or other public place, with a maximum penalty of a £5000 fine
- Keep naked flames, including cigarettes, away from fireworks.
- If you live in a flat, do not light fires or fireworks on your balcony

Sparklers

Did you know a simple sparkler reaches a temperature of up to 2,000°C? That's over 15 times the boiling point of water. Handle them with care and follow the advice below:

Sparkler safety tips

- Store sparklers and fireworks in a closed box in a cool, dry place
- Always light them one at a time **and wear gloves**
- Plunge finished sparklers - hot end down - into a bucket of water as soon as they have burnt out
- Remember sparklers can stay hot for a long time
- Don't take sparklers to public displays. It will be too crowded to use them safely
- Remember, always take care when holding a sparkler and never hold a baby or child if you have one in your hand.
- Don't hand sparklers to children under five.