

Stay Safe Policy

1.0 SCOPE

Purpose

- 1.1 This Policy sets out whg's 'Stay Safe' approach to fire safety within our multi-storey, multi-occupied buildings over 11 metres in height and sets out how this will be implemented. This is to ensure the safety of our customers, occupants and visitors to our multi-storey, multi-occupied buildings.

Legal and regulatory framework

- 1.2 Our responsibilities in relation to customer safety are set out in legislation and the key regulatory frameworks in which we need to be compliant with:
 - The Building Safety Bill – the overarching legislative framework for building safety;
 - The Fire Safety Bill – the regulatory requirement to manage and maintain safe buildings for occupants; and
 - The Social Housing White Paper – to provide a high standard of building safety for all occupants and the collaborative framework to engage with occupants of multi-occupied buildings.
- 1.3 The Corporate Director of Business Strategy and Assets is the 'responsible person' at whg for ensuring compliance with the above.
- 1.4 The Director of Energy and Programme Management is the responsible person for building safety.
- 1.5 The Governance and Financial Viability Standard of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) states that Registered Providers, like whg, shall 'adhere to all relevant law'.
- 1.6 The RSH's Home Standard requires Registered Providers to meet all applicable statutory requirements for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes, including fire safety.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Customer Safety

- 2.1 'Stay Safe' ensures that customers are safe in a protected area and, if safe to do so, should wait there for further instructions from the West Midlands Fire

Service (WMFS). Detailed guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is provided in Appendix 1.

- 2.2 Fire safety in homes owned or managed by whg is of the highest priority and we are committed to ensuring that colleagues, customers and other persons are protected.
- 2.3 whg recognise the potentially devastating effects of failure to ensure adequate fire safety and we will provide effective prevention systems to meet relevant legislative requirements, regulatory standards, health and safety obligations and guidance from government and the fire service.
- 2.4 whg work in partnership with the WMFS to ensure the safety of our customers, colleagues and other persons in the event of a fire. We are committed to educating our customers about fire safety and their responsibilities to reduce the risk of fire occurring in their homes or communal areas.
- 2.5 It is important to recognise that 'Stay Safe' is part of the overall strategic response to a fire in multi-storey blocks. Where the fire or products of combustion are making the living area unsafe, customers will be able to decide to evacuate if they feel unsafe to ensure their own safety.
- 2.6 'Stay Safe' is a nationally recognised concept that places customers, in protected places of safety, allowing the fire brigade maximum access to any effected areas allowing an effective intervention in the event of a full evacuation of the building. whg support this principle, through the effective communication to customers, maintenance of our properties and buildings, and education of colleagues and customers in the principles of the 'Stay Safe' concept. This follows the events and learning from the Grenfell inquiry and is identified as good practice giving our customers reassurance in relation to the media coverage of the disaster and living in a high rise building.
- 2.7 Through the effective management of our working processes, we will ensure, so far as is practicable, the integrity of each compartmented area of the building is checked and maintained annually as part of the building and fire risk assessment inspection.
- 2.8 whg will agree a common communications message to our customers that ensures their safety and clear understanding of the Stay Safe Policy through the customer engagement strategy. Instruction in the event of a building safety incident to evacuate will be the decision of the fire service attending the fire via the incident command centre set up by the WMFS. Their decision will be based on their assessment of the incident or fire and their recommendation to maintain the stay safe strategy or to implement a zonal or full evacuation procedure.

Customer Engagement

- 2.9 whg will be proactive in providing general fire safety advice e.g. leaflets, sign up packs and website links to customers on what to do in the event of a fire in their building and highlight any other building safety information that is specifically relevant to their building. This will form part of the customer engagement strategy.
- 2.10 We will provide a range of ways for customers to raise any fire or other safety concerns with us including identifying building safety “champions” for each building. This is an ongoing and developing strategy over the next 12 months.

Mitigating Risks

- 2.11 Fire risk assessments are carried out as set out in the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 (FSO) and the Housing Act 2004 for purpose-built multi-occupied buildings. Under the FSO it is a requirement for landlords to ensure that a suitable fire risk assessment is undertaken to all common areas in blocks of flats, maisonettes and the communal areas of multi-occupied buildings.
- 2.12 We will take prompt remedial action to manage or remove any fire risks or hazards identified during a fire risk assessment or reported by customers, visitors or colleagues.
- 2.13 Any other issues that may compromise fire safety within whg multi-occupied buildings identified will be treated as a priority.
- 2.14 A zero-tolerance approach to obstructions in communal areas and all evacuation routes and staircases will be applied. The storage of all potential ignition sources and fuels in common areas and balconies are also prohibited by customers, colleagues and contractors.
- 2.15 We will identify customers with vulnerabilities or specific needs that may require additional support to enable them to evacuate their home and building safely. This information is commonly shared with the WMFS and commonly known as PEEPS (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans). This data is protected through a pre-arranged protocol that is GDPR compliant.
- 2.16 Individual fire evacuation plans will be specific to each multi-occupied building within the scope of this Policy. Plans will be reviewed annually and amended to suit the requirements of the building and its occupants where necessary.
These plans are contained within the Twinned It digital model for each building.

3.0 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 3.1 We will regularly monitor, audit and report to the Fire Safety Group (FSG) and the Health and Safety Committee.
- 3.2 Fire risk assessments for multi-occupied buildings are undertaken annually and all associated remedial or programme works identified are monitored by the Fire Safety Group quarterly. In addition, a six monthly audit review is undertaken by the FSG of all fire risk assessment activities and actions. Internal audits are also undertaken by our auditor, BDO.

4.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 4.1 Individual block fire evacuation plans consider the needs of all occupants and passive and active fire safety measures are designed to ensure people are not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics. We have taken positive action in braille on signs, audible and visual alarm activations.
- 4.2 Customers are to take necessary fire precautions within their flat and keep up to date with whg's Stay Safe Policy and fire safety guidance. This advice is provided by the WMFS safe and well visits.

5.0 TRAINING AND DISSEMINATION

- 5.1 All relevant colleagues from service areas will require appropriate training as required to demonstrate competence in building safety and application of the regulatory requirements. Design of the training will be co-ordinated with the Learning and Development Team and this will require customer participation as part of the customer engagement strategy. This will include general fire and building safety for relevant colleagues.

6.0 MONITOR AND REVIEW

- 6.1 This Policy will be monitored by the Director of Energy and Programme Management and reviewed every three years by the Fire Safety Committee, providing assurance to the Health and Safety Committee and the Customer Experience Committee. It is approved by the Policy Group.

7.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 7.1 Documents, policies and procedures associated with this Policy are:
 - whg Fire Risk Assessment Policy
 - whg Health and Safety Policy
 - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- whg Tenancy Agreement
- Tenancy Management Policy

APPENDIX 1

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) – advice provided by the Fire and Rescue Service after Grenfell:

- Fire and rescue services work with local authorities, developers, management committees and tenants to help ensure that the fire safety arrangements in high rise accommodation are safe and appropriate.
- The advice provided by fire and rescue services is based on effective fire safety arrangements that are required, proposed, and then provided in the building – these include compartmentation of the building and suitably protected means of escape amongst others.
- If there is a fire inside a flat or maisonette the advice is to alert all the people in the flat and leave the property and close all doors. They should follow a pre-determined escape plan and if there is a lot of smoke within the flat, people should crawl along the floor where the air should be clearer and the temperature cooler.
- They should always use the stairs rather than the lift and call 999 as soon as they are in a safe place. If there is a fire elsewhere in the building then the structure of the flat – walls, floors, and doors – are designed to give appropriate protection. It is important for responsible owners to ensure that high rise buildings are properly constructed and any refurbishment or maintenance is carried out to compliant standards of fire safety.
- If there is a fire in your building but not inside your own home, then you are usually safer to stay in your flat unless the heat or smoke from the fire is affecting you. If you 'stay put' you should still immediately call 999 for advice and to ensure that the fire and rescue service along with attending emergency crews have been notified.

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Corporate Plan aim	Deliver high quality homes and services to our customers
Equality analysis	N/A
Key changes made	<p>The general outline of the policy has changed to incorporate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommendations set out from the Dame Judith Hackitt review post Grenfell• The Building Safety Bill• The Fire Safety Bill• Housing White Paper 2020