

Background

Electrical Safety First has two proposals for the Fire Safety Bill which we believe will improve the safety of residents living in High Rise Residential Buildings (HRRBs) across England and in Wales.

Whilst Electrical Safety First believes that the Government needs to introduce a number of measures to improve electrical safety in UK homesⁱ including a strategy to reduce electrical fires, and provide support for vulnerable people who are unable to afford electrical safety improvements - **amending this Bill provides the opportunity to make immediate differences to people who live in multi-occupied buildings.**

1. What are the proposals?

- i) Mandatory electrical safety checks carried out in all HRRBs **every 5 years regardless of tenure.**
- ii) A responsible person (Management Company) must keep **a register of white goods** in the building and ensure that they are registered with the manufacturer for potential recall.

We believe these two proposals will help prevent electrical accidents and fires in HRRBs.

2. Do mandatory checks build on any current regulation?

Yes. The Government introduced The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector Regulations (England) 2020 which will introduce mandatory electrical safety checks for all tenants living in privately rented homes. Any privately rented home in a HRRB will be subject to one of these checks, therefore our proposals build on these new regulations.

HRRB are often mixed tenure – with a mix of privately rented homes, social housing, and owner occupied. Under the current regulations only privately rented homes in HRRBs require an electrical safety check by law. There needs to be consistency across all tenures.

3. Who would pay for the electrical safety checks?

The owner of the property.

4. Do social landlords undertake mandatory electrical safety checks?

Some do operate schemes which ensure electrical checks in the home, but this is not mandatory at present.

5. How much would they cost?

Around £150 to £200 every 5 years per domestic premise.

6. Would this be burdensome on landlords?

No. This works out to around £30 a year or 57p a week.

7. What role would the Fire Services have in mandatory electrical safety checks?

None. Firefighters undertake Home Safety Visits as part of their work to prevent fires, but they will not be responsible for these checks – they are for electricians who are Registered Competent Persons. Firefighters are also not responsible for registering people's appliances – but they can provide information as to why it is important to do so.

8. How would they be enforced?

The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector Regulations (England) 2020 are enforced by local authorities. We expect any extension to the regulations to be enforced under the same regime being implemented.

9. What if a owner occupier in a tower block refused to have a check undertaken and did not grant access to a flat?

This could be governed by the Management Company for the building as part of the lease. In rented homes the landlords should gain access to the property with 24hrs notice. Councils should give 48hrs notice if the local council arranges the work to be done. *(This is all contained within the Regulations 2020 guidance)*

We believe a reasonable attempt would be similar to that used in the PRS when requiring access. Contact would have to be made in writing and plenty of notice given – for an owner occupier flat in a tower block the management company could give 48hrs notice if their lease stated that a check is necessary.

10. How would a register of white goods work?

The Management Company would maintain the register of white goods, with information about appliances in in each flat, including brand, type of appliance and model. They are already responsible for maintaining records for fire safety.

11. Would access be needed for registration of appliances?

No. The tenant / owner occupier would provide the information on appliances in use to the Management Company "Responsible Person". They would not be having their appliances tested.

The register will identify apartment number and what appliances are in use and the make and model of the appliance. It could be a digital file held by the Management Company. The Management company / responsible person will also provide visual information in communal areas and information to each apartment, as appropriate.

Robert Jervis-Gibbons
Electrical Safety First

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Should you have any questions at all please do not hesitate to contact us at: policy@electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk or by telephone on 07970 091373

¹ <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media/2287/uk-policy-messages-2019.pdf>