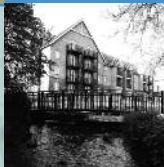


General
Information
& Helpful Advice



General Information & Helpful Advice

Useful information

Please take a few moments to complete the information in the table below so that you can provide the details quickly when required. If you need help doing this please call us on 0800 876 6060.

Item	Location/Type
Mains water stopcock location (this is often under a sink in the kitchen or in a downstairs toilet)	
Heating boiler location (this could be in the kitchen, a utility room or behind a gas or solid fuel fire)	
Heating type (gas, solid fuel, oil, electric)	
Electricity Fusebox location (often located in a cupboard under the stairs or in the hallway)	
Location of the gas tap/meter (could be in a cupboard or in a cupboard on an outside wall)	
Location of the hot water cylinder (normally in a cupboard on a landing in a house or in cupboard in the bathroom)	

Cutting energy costs

Here are some tips to help cut the cost of your energy bills

- Don't leave appliances on standby;
- Keep your fridge and freezer full;
- Only boil as much water as you need in your kettle;
- Turn your thermostat down on your central heating by 1°C;
- Wash your laundry at lower temperatures drop to 30°C instead of 40°C;
- Switch off lights when a room is not in use;
- Use the washing line instead of the tumble dryer;
- Unplug chargers and power supplies when not in use;
- Shower instead of bathing;
- Only use the washing machine when you have a full load to wash;
- Defrost your freezer regularly to keep it running at top performance.

A little investment goes a long way...

- Install low energy light bulbs;
- Fit draught-excluders to any single-glazed doors or windows;
- Cut your tumble dryer time by 25% by using dryer balls;
- When replacing kitchen appliances, always choose one with a top energy-efficiency rating.

Allowing people access to your home

All our staff and contractors carry identification cards. If you want to check their identification please call us on 0800 876 6060.

Always

- Use a door chain and spy hole if you have one;
- Ask callers for their identity;
- Refuse entry to a stranger or someone you are not sure of.

Never

- Allow anyone into YOUR home if you are not happy about them;
- Part with cash after being told that work will be done in the future.

Remember, a genuine caller will not object to you taking precautions.

Some simple advice to help you maintain your home

Condensation

Many of the activities in the house involve heating or boiling water (washing, drying clothes, cooking, ironing, bathing) and when water is heated it turns into water vapour, and can be seen rising from a saucepan or kettle. This water vapour is held in suspension so long as the air is warm, but if too much vapour is created, or if the air is cool, then the vapour turns back into water on cold surfaces. This process is called condensation.

It is a natural reaction, but does mean that the water is deposited on walls, ceilings, floors, furniture and clothing –

wherever it encounters a colder surface. It can be seen easily on windows, because glass is cold, and this should be a warning that it could be happening elsewhere less obviously. Fungal growth (an unpleasant black mould) will develop on surfaces unless they are wiped dry.

A few simple rules to help prevent condensation

1. When cooking and washing, keep the kitchen internal door shut to prevent moist air being carried into the rest of the house and keep the kitchen windows open.
2. The bathroom door should be kept shut during and after bathing and the bathroom window opened after bathing. If you have extractor fans these should be used.
3. Do not allow kettles and pans to boil any longer than necessary.
4. Clothes should be dried outside and not on radiators or in front of a gas or electric fire. Tumble dryers must be vented to the outside through a duct.
5. Paraffin and bottled gas heaters give off large quantities of water vapour when in use; every gallon of paraffin burnt produces a gallon of water, which will settle on cold surfaces. When using this kind of heater, or any flueless gas heater, ensure that the window is open sufficiently.
6. Always wipe up condensation with a cloth.

Frost precautions

The house should not be left entirely without heating for more than a day or two in very cold weather. If the house is to be left for any length of time and the heating turned off, it is safest to drain off the hot water and cold water systems completely.

This means turning off the main supply stopcock on the cold riser to the cold water storage tanks. Hose pipes should be fitted to draincocks and the system drained down. All taps should be turned on until they run dry, then turned off again. Flush the WC.

If you are unsure on how to carry out precautions, please call us on 0800 876 6060.

Before turning on the heating, you must turn on the main supply stopcocks and the stopcocks of the downpipes from cold and hot water storage tanks. Turn on taps until the water flows freely again. Keep all pipes and tanks in the roof space, outhouses and external WC's well insulated to prevent freezing and burst pipes.

If you have controllable gas/oil/electric heating, it is possible to avoid this inconvenience by adjusting the timer to bring the heating on for an hour or so twice a day at a reduced level. This will normally keep the dwelling free from freezing.

Leaking, burst or frozen pipes

When pipes leak, place a dish or bowl underneath the leak. Pull back any carpets and lay down newspapers or towels to absorb any dampness.

When pipes burst, turn off the water at the main stop cock, and any gate valves from the water tank, and switch off any water heaters. Open all taps to drain water from the system.

Can it be isolated?

Some items of equipment may have their own isolation valve. If not, you may be able to isolate the fault by just turning off a gate valve on a pipe coming out of the cold water tank. This will leave you with some services, even though it might only

be cold water at the kitchen tap. You could then temporarily flush toilets using a bucket of cold water.

If electric fittings get wet

DO NOT TOUCH and turn off electricity at the meter.

When ceilings bulge

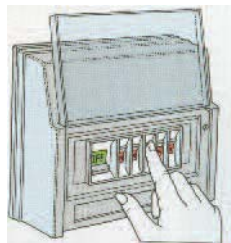
To prevent the ceiling falling down, place a bucket under the bulge and pierce a small hole to let the water through.

When pipes freeze

Turn off the water at the main stopcock and open the cold taps. It is best to leave the pipes frozen but you may try to thaw the pipe using hot water bottles.

Electrics

Fuses



Check your fuse box if you lose power to all of the sockets or lights in a room or on one floor of a house. Modern fuse boxes simply need you to flick a switch or press a button. The fuse box is normally located near to a front door, in a cupboard or perhaps under the stairs.

Find out where yours is before you have a problem.

Remember:- a blown fuse indicates a problem somewhere else, possibly a faulty socket or light fitting. If you think electrics may have been affected by water, give them time to dry out before resetting a fuse switch. Fuses should be marked to indicate which circuit they manage, e.g. lights, sockets etc. If a fuse cannot be reset, this information is useful to the electrician in identifying where the problem will be in the property.

Switches and sockets



Some fittings also have a fused switch or fuse in the circuit so that they can be isolated (this commonly applies to immersion heaters and the like). If something doesn't work and it has a fuse switch, check the fuse first before reporting a problem.

Light Fittings

If you have an electrical problem, there are some things you can check which will help us to respond appropriately and avoid an unnecessary call out.

- If you have no power, is it to a single socket, all of the sockets on the ground or first floor or all the sockets in the house?
- Similarly, if you have no lights, is it just one, all on a floor or all in the property?
- If all power/lights are off in the property, have you checked the fuse box?
- Have you accidentally got water into the electrics (e.g. spilt water on a socket whilst watering house plants)?
- If you have no electricity, are your neighbours affected? If so there is a supply problem which will be resolved as soon as possible by the supplier (you can find their telephone contact number in the phone book).

The more you can check for yourself, the quicker we will be able to diagnose your problem and effect a repair.

REMEMBER: Electricity CAN KILL - repairs should be carried out by a qualified electrician.

Smoke detectors

Your smoke detector has been designed to be as maintenance free as possible. To keep your detector in good working order you must:-

- Test the detector weekly (see section below “How to tell if the detector is working properly”).

ELECTRICAL SHOCK HAZARD: Turn off mains power at the fuse box or circuit breaker powering the detector before following these cleaning instructions.

- Vacuum the detector at least once a year, using the soft brush attachment to your vacuum cleaner;
- Clean the detector’s cover when it gets dirty. Be sure not to get any water on the detector components. **Test detector after restoring power.**

How to tell if the detector is working properly

When the indicator light flashes about every 40 seconds, the detector is receiving power from the battery or electrical current.

Test the detector weekly by pushing firmly on the test button until the alarm sounds. This should take 20 seconds. If the alarm makes a continuous loud sound, the detector is working properly. **This is the only way to be sure that the detector is working.**

Never use an open flame of any kind to test your detector. You may set fire to and damage the detector as well as your home. The built-in test switch accurately tests all detector functions as required by Underwriters’ Laboratories. It is the only correct way to test.

If you have a battery powered smoke detector, this will be replaced with a wired system whenever it becomes necessary to carry out an electrical check to your home.

Wall fixings

Most modern houses have walls of lightweight materials which may require special fixings to secure heavy pictures, mirrors, bathroom cabinets and so on. Steel pin picture hangers can be used for lightweight articles. This is a list of some wall constructions and the fitting to use.

1. Blockwork (breeze block): plastic or fibre wall plugs and screws.
2. Paramount Partitioning (hollow plasterboard): “rawlplugs”, spring toggles, rawl and/or similar butterfly bolts.
3. Plasterboard on blockwork: “rawlplug”, spring toggles, rawl anchors or similar, butterfly bolts, but heavy articles should be fixed direct through the partitioning into blockwork using plaster or fibre wall plugs and larger screws.
4. Plasterboard on timber supports: articles should be fixed directly through plasterboard into timber supports with timber screws/nails, or as for “Paramount” into the plasterboard.

Central heating

Please read the operating instructions for your central heating so that you know how to operate this safely. If you do not have instructions please call our Customer Contact Centre on freephone 0800 876 6060.

If your central heating does not work, here are a few simple checks you should make before reporting this as a repair:

1. If you have gas central heating this needs both an electrical and gas supply to operate the controls and ignite the boiler, so check that both of your supplies are working.
2. Check that the timer is set correctly. This has to be re-set in autumn and spring when the clocks change.
3. Check the thermostat is not set too low. If it is the heating will not come on.
4. Switch your heating to constant. This overrides the timer. If the heating comes on this means that your timer is not set correctly.
5. Check that your radiators are turned on and that if they are fitted with individual thermostats these are set to a high temperature so that they come on.

If your central heating still does not work, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 0800 876 6060.

Heating and/or hot water loss is classed as an emergency for calls received between 8 am to 7 pm and at any time of the day or night for elderly and disabled customers.

Gas leaks

If you think you have a gas leak, phone the National Grid immediately on: 0800 111999

If you smell gas in your home:

- Turn off the gas supply at the meter;
- Put out all naked flames and fires;
- Do not touch any electrical switches or equipment;
- Open all windows;
- Do not use a mobile phone.

Fire

If you have a fire in your home:

- Get everyone out of the home immediately; do not stop to save belongings;
- Close all doors;
- Telephone 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade;
- Inform us as soon as possible.

If you live in sheltered accommodation your Sheltered Housing Manager will give you information on what to do in the event of a fire.

Double glazing

Some people are concerned about double glazing restricting access and ventilation in fires. As a safety precaution, we advise all residents to always make sure they know where the window keys are and think about their escape route if there was a fire.

All new windows at first floor level and above have safety restrictors fitted, preventing them from opening fully, without its release. They are designed to reduce the risk of falling from an open window.

To open the window fully for cleaning:

- Press the release control marked 'press' on the bottom hinge and slide the bottom of the window towards the middle of the opening;
- Repeat this for the upper hinge;
- Slide the window further until access can be gained to the outside of the window;

- To re-activate catches, close the window as normal pulling the handle.

If you have any problems, or need any further operating instructions for your windows, please get in touch with our Customer Contact Centre on 0800 876 6060.

Stopcocks

Your stopcock should normally be found under your sink in the kitchen. You need to know this so that you can turn off your water supply quickly in an emergency. If you need help locating your stopcock please contact our Customer Contact Centre on 0800 876 6060.

Loft access

The loft area in your home is not intended for the storage of your personal items. Loft access is designed for the maintenance of your water supply. Anyone who enters their loft does so at their own risk and will be re-charged for any damaged caused.

Fire safety in communal areas

New fire safety laws mean that we will be carrying out fire risk assessments in all enclosed communal areas of our properties. Where it is necessary we will be renewing or adding new equipment such as fire detection equipment, emergency lighting or new signs.

For your safety, all communal areas such as:

- Corridors;
- Staircases;
- Balconies;

Must be kept totally clear and not used to store any items as they could block your exit in an emergency.

Checks

We will regularly check communal areas to make sure they are free from obstruction and flammable materials which could pose a threat to your safety. Any items found will have a sticker put on them asking for the item to be removed within seven days.

This includes buggies, bikes, carpets and plants in communal areas.

If the item is not removed we will take it away and dispose of it and if we can trace the owner we will charge them for removing the item. Please be responsible for your own safety and that of your neighbours and visitors by not storing items in the communal areas.

Household insurance

We insure your home against fire, storm, flood and any damage for which we are responsible. We do not insure belongings against fire, theft or accidents that are not caused by our negligence.

We strongly advise all our residents to take out household insurance to cover against incidents such as a burglary or accidental damage.

In some circumstances, for example a bad water leak we may need to gain access to your property without giving you written notice. If this happens we will try to contact you. It is important that we always have a contact telephone number where a keyholder can be reached. In exceptional circumstances, if we are unable to contact you we may need to break-in. If we have to do this we will make your home safe before we leave.

Asbestos

Asbestos is a natural mineral that has been used in a range of building materials to make them more rigid and fire resistant. It was used widely as a building material in Great Britain from the 1930s through to the mid 1980s. It is our policy not to use materials containing asbestos in our properties.

However, as we have a large variety of homes, some of which were built when asbestos was widely used, it is likely that some of our homes will contain asbestos in some form.

Many people have worries about asbestos, but undisturbed asbestos is usually safe. However, care should be taken to prevent the release of fibres from asbestos as they can cause serious damage to your health.

What are we doing about asbestos in our properties?

We have carried out surveys on all types of our homes to identify any that were built using materials containing asbestos.

If your home has been identified as containing asbestos we will:

- Offer information and advice on the location, type and condition of any asbestos;
- Remove or make safe any materials containing asbestos that pose a serious risk to health or home;
- Remove any materials containing asbestos that do not pose a risk to health, when it is safe and cost effective to do so;
- Manage any materials containing asbestos which are left in place to minimise the risk to the health and safety of our

residents, employees, contractors, visitors and other people using our premises.

If you think you may have asbestos in your home please leave it alone, it is safe unless it is damaged or disturbed. If you plan to do any DIY work on or around any materials that you think may contain asbestos in your home you should seek our advice before you carry out the work.

Asbestos do's and don'ts:

- Leave asbestos alone, it's safe unless it's damaged or disturbed;
- Call us if the asbestos is damaged or disturbed;
- Never sand, drill or saw asbestos materials;
- Do not attempt to remove asbestos materials.

For more information or for a leaflet on dealing with Asbestos please call our Customer Contact Centre on 0800 876 6060. You can also download the leaflet from our website: www.mdha.co.uk.