

Fire safety in high rise buildings



Fire Safety - Your questions answered

Following the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy we have been asked a number of questions around fire safety in our high rise buildings. Here we answer some of the most commonly asked questions.

What is the cladding on the outside of the high rise buildings made of?

All our high rise cladding is made of Rockwool - a fire retardant substance that cannot catch fire. It has been installed correctly and is not the same type of cladding as used at Grenfell Tower.

Why are there no sprinklers in the buildings?

At the time of construction there was no requirement to install sprinklers in high rises. However, we have dry risers throughout the building. This is a system of internal pipework that allows the fire service to access water easily on each floor. We also have fire doors throughout the building including all front doors to every flat. Over the coming weeks we will be ensuring that all aspects of fire safety are reconsidered in light of the emerging technical advice from any investigation into the tragedy at Grenfell Tower. This will include consideration of sprinklers.

Do the buildings meet current fire regulations?

All fire regulations were met at the time the high rises were built. We carry out annual inspections and in addition to this, regular safety checks are made each week. Our Estate Assistants also walk the stairwells from top to bottom twice a week and our cleaning teams are also trained to report any obstructions.

How will the fire service get here if parked cars are blocking their way?

Some tenants have contacted us about fire service access around their high rise due to the number of cars parked nearby. We have spoken with the fire service who assure us that in the event of an emergency they will do whatever is necessary to reach the building.

Are you keeping the 'Stay Put' policy?

Yes, our 'Stay Put' policy remains in force in our high rise buildings. This ensures stairwells remain clear for fire crews to enter the building and tackle a fire. In April, 2013, we had a fire in the stairwell at Merton House. Tenants stayed put and the fire was extinguished with no injuries to tenants or damage to flats.

Can the CCTV cameras help spot a fire?

Our high rises are monitored 24/7 which means any fires can be spotted quickly.

We will continue to meet with West Midlands Fire Service and lessons from the Grenfell Tower tragedy will be learnt. Your safety and wellbeing is of paramount importance to us. We will provide further fire safety updates in the future. SCH will soon be holding a special Board meeting to discuss the fire.