


# THE HOUSING HEALTH AND SAFETY RATING SYSTEM (HHSRS)

A short guide for landlords and tenants



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## **The booklet contains information on what Environmental Health Officers will look for when inspecting rented property and what action can be taken by landlords to reduce the common hazards found within the private rented sector.**

The Housing Act 2004 brought in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which is the legal method of inspecting houses. HHSRS involves checking for any defects and deficiencies to the whole dwelling - including access paths, gardens and outbuildings - which could potentially harm the health and safety of occupants or visitors to the property. Officers check for 29 different hazards when assessing dwellings and will apply two tests - the likelihood of a dangerous occurrence as a result of the hazard, and the likely outcome i.e. injury.

Some hazards are part of everyday living - for example the staircase between the ground and first floors of a house. A broken stair would present a serious hazard - an occupant could trip or fall down the stairs. If the broken stair is at the top of the staircase this could be much more dangerous than one at the bottom. Poor lighting and lack of handrails may also increase the risk of a fall. The likely outcome also intensifies with a risk of a more serious injury or even death. For properties built after or in compliance with the Building Regs 1991 many of these 29 hazards will not be present. Continuous improvements in the building regulations has meant that these hazards have been designed out.

A landlord has responsibility to ensure that high rated hazards are reduced to an acceptable low risk.

We have produced this guide to enable you - as a landlord - to understand the measures that should be taken to avoid the most common hazards or reduce them to an acceptable level.

The government has produced comprehensive guidance: 'Housing Health and Safety Rating System - Guidance for landlords and other property related professionals'. It describes the 29 hazards in more detail and gives examples of assessments. This guidance and further information about the HHSRS can be downloaded free from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

This guidance also applies to houses in multiple occupation (HMOS). However additional requirements may exist under the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation Regulations 2006 and also if the property needs licensing.

## Additional Information

- tenants are advised to always keep up their rent payments even when the house has a disrepair issue or if there is a dispute with the Landlord. Tenants are advised to seek advice from relevant sources to deal with disputes.
- rent arrears will not stop an officer dealing with unsafe housing.
- Local Authorities have a duty to deal with harassment of tenants and illegal evictions
- a landlord must carry out major works before the property is re-let
- if there is a grievance against a tenant proper legal procedures should be followed
- in extreme circumstances officers can suspend action until a tenant leaves a property
- please seek your own legal advice in order to evict tenants, or contact your Local Authority's Housing Advice Section for advice about correct procedures for dealing with anti-social or problem tenants.

## Energy Efficiency Grants and Discount Schemes provided by Utilities

For more details on the above and to see if your property/tenant qualifies, please contact the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre on 0300 123 1234 for free and impartial advice. For information on local energy efficiency schemes/funding please contact the Yorkshire Energy Partnership on 01904 545020.

## Landlords Energy Saving Allowance (LESA)

If as a landlord you make energy saving improvements to your property, you could reduce the tax you pay. LESA is a tax allowance, not a cash payment, that allows you to claim up to £1,500 against tax every year. This allowance can be claimed for each property you rent out for the costs of buying and installing certain energy saving products, but only for what you actually spend.

You can claim LESA for what you have spent on:

- cavity wall and loft insulation after 6 April 2004
- solid wall insulation after 7 April 2005
- draught-proofing and hot water system insulation after 6 April 2006
- floor insulation after 6 April 2007

You can claim LESA through your tax return up to 1 April 2015, when the availability of this allowance will end. More details are available at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

# Damp and Mould Growth

**Officers will...  
...check for damp  
and mould growth  
in habitable rooms  
- living rooms and  
bedrooms - and  
excess moisture  
in kitchens and  
bathrooms. Damp  
and mould are  
common complaints**



## Reducing the Hazard

- the property should be free from rising and penetrating damp and condensation
- the property's damp proof course should be in good condition
- provision for clothes and drying facilities should be provided - this will discourage tenants from using heaters which cause damp and mould
- plumbing should be properly installed to prevent leaks and damp. Facilities should be properly connected to waste pipes and regularly maintained
- guttering and downpipes should be correctly installed; secure and maintained to prevent a build up of debris
- extractor fans should be fitted in kitchens and bathrooms to help remove moisture
- adequate and suitable ventilation via air bricks, trickle vents or roof and underfloor vents should be available without causing draughts or excess heat loss
- frost protection will help avoid burst pipes and tanks
- there should be adequate thermal insulation, and appropriate means of space heating (see 'Excess Cold').

*Further Information: British Standards BS 5250 Code of practice for control of condensation in buildings, BS 8102: Code of Practice for protection of structures against water from the ground, Building Regulation Approved Documents: C (site preparation and resistance to moisture), F (Ventilation of Buildings), and L (Conservation of Fuel and Power).*

## Excess Cold



### Officers will...

**...check for a fixed, controllable, fully working heating system in all rooms of the dwelling. They will also check for sufficient insulation within the dwelling, and causes of excess draughts - disrepair to doors and windows**

### Reducing the Hazard

- provision of loft insulation (min 270mm)
- provision of cavity wall insulation if the property has a cavity wall.
- provision of solid wall insulation
- insulation of hot water tanks
- an adequate fully working heating system, in all rooms of the dwelling - including halls - should be controllable by the occupants and have a timer switch. It should be properly installed and maintained by a suitably qualified engineer - Gas Safe and NICEIC registered.
- the property should be free from damp (see 'Damp and Mould Growth').
- draught-proofing of windows and doors, and double or secondary glazing to minimise heat loss.
- in multi-occupied buildings provision for space heating may be centrally controlled. Controls must allow the occupants to regulate the temperature within their dwelling.

*Further Information: Building Regulation Approved Document L1: Conservation of fuel and power in dwellings, and Approved Document F: Ventilation of buildings*

# Gas Safety

## Officers will...

**...visually inspect all gas appliances and flues within a dwelling. Where a faulty gas appliance, lack of adequate ventilation or poorly sited appliance is suspected a Landlords Gas Safety Certificate will be required from a suitably Gas Safe registered engineer.**

## Reducing the Hazard

- landlords have a duty to ensure a Gas Safety check is carried out every 12 months by a Gas Safe registered engineer on the installation, and each appliance and flue, at each rented property. A copy of the certificate must be shown to a new tenant before they move, in, or to an existing tenant within 28 days. Officers will ask tenants if they have seen a valid safety certificate prior to or during their tenancy and routinely ask landlords for a copy of the certificate.
- a CO detector should be installed to give warning to occupants if gas is building up within the dwelling. These should be appropriately sited and maintained.
- flues should be maintained regularly and not sited close to an openable window. Balanced flues avoid the likelihood of combustion gases spilling back and use less energy.
- gas, oil and solid fuel burning appliances must be correctly installed and maintained. Ventilation must be provided in accordance with manufacturers guidelines.
- LPG is heavier than air, so ground level ventilation should be provided where LPG is used.

*HSE Gas Safety Advice Line - 0800 300363 or visit [www.hse.gov.uk/gas](http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas)*

*Gas Safe - [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)*

*Oil appliances must be checked by OFTEC for Heating Technicians and HETAS for Solid Fuel.*

# Electrical Hazards

**Officers will...  
...visually inspect the  
electrical installation -  
including meters, fuses,  
wiring, sockets, light  
fittings and switches**



## Reducing the Hazard

- electrical safety inspections should be undertaken by a registered engineer - NICEIC, NAPIT, ELECSA, BRE, BSI. An electrical installation condition report covering the whole installation including any external areas - should be obtained and any works identified carried out to ensure the installation is safe. Reports are usually valid for 5 years.
- further regular checks and maintenance should be carried out by a competent person to ensure there is no damage to the installation and the electric system is in a safe working order. For example when tenancies change hands.
- the installation should include Residual Current Devices (RCD) which provide safety against electric shocks. These can be incorporated into the consumer unit. The devices detect deficiencies in the electrical system and switch off the supply.
- the consumer unit should include mini-circuit breakers and have clearly labelled circuits.
- there should be an adequate number of appropriately sited sockets and light switches to supply power to all necessary appliances and reduce the need for extension cables. As a guide, the kitchen should have three double sockets above the worktop and two double sockets below them. All bedrooms and living rooms should have at least two double sockets.

*Further Information: British Standard BS7671 Requirements for electrical installations*

*Electrical Safety First (formerly Electrical Safety Council) provides guidance for landlords, visit [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk), helpline number 020 3463 5100*



# Fire Safety

## Officers will...

**...check for fire detection appropriate for the size and layout of the property, a protected escape route (escape windows or fire doors), and defects to electrical or heating systems**

## Reducing the Hazard

- all dwellings should have mains operated smoke detectors installed on each level of the property, and linked together to ensure detectors sound simultaneously. These should be properly maintained and regularly tested.
- alarms are available for those with hearing impairment.
- there should be a safe means of escape in case of fire from all parts of the dwelling. There may be a need for an escape window on the first floor, particularly where stairs open into a living room rather than a hallway leading to an external exit.
- the dwelling should be constructed of fire resistant materials. The design and construction should help contain and limit the spread of fire. Internal doors, including entrance doors to flats should be fire resistant, properly fitted and have self-closers where appropriate.
- sufficient and appropriately sited electric sockets will reduce the need for extension leads and overloading of sockets. There should be no defects to sockets or switches.
- all fitted appliances and equipment which present a possible source of ignition should be correctly installed and maintained. A fixed heating system should be properly installed and regularly serviced (see 'Excess Cold'). This will discourage the use of portable heaters.
- cookers should not be sited on a through route and should not be near any flammable materials.
- houses in Multiple Occupation have additional requirements, the Local Authority should be contacted for advice.

*Further Information: Building Regulation Approved Document B, and British Standards BS5588, Code of Practice 5839, and BS5446. Housing - Fire Safety - Guidance on fire safety provisions for certain types of existing housing (LACORS). Fire Safety Guidance (NY Local Authorities). Alternatively for further help, contact Residential Services, Environmental Health at Hambleton District Council on 01609 779977 or [www.hambleton.gov.uk](http://www.hambleton.gov.uk). Fire Safety Guidance [www.northyorksfire.gov.uk](http://www.northyorksfire.gov.uk)*

## Food Safety



**Officers will...  
...check that the  
kitchen is of an  
adequate size, design  
and layout to ensure  
occupants can store,  
prepare and cook  
food in a safe and  
hygienic manner**

### Reducing the Hazard

- there should be space for sufficient cooking facilities away from any through route
- there should be sufficient appropriate power sockets above and below the worktop (see Electrical Hazards)
- there should be adequate lighting and appropriate means of ventilation
- there should be enough food storage facilities and they should be finished internally and externally with smooth impervious surfaces to enable cleaning
- the sink and drainer, with suitable splash-back, must be in good repair and easy to clean. There must be an adequate supply of hot and cold water at all times
- wall surfaces should be smooth and easy to clean. Worktop surfaces should be of an adequate size and have an impervious finish. The joint between any sink, drainer or worktop and the adjacent wall should be sealed and watertight
- corners and junctions should be sealed and covered to enable cleaning
- the kitchen floor should be fitted with appropriate covering, such as tiles or lino, that is easy to clean and free from cracks and other disrepair
- in multi-occupied premises where facilities are shared, separate food storage, preparation and cooking facilities for different households can help reduce the risk of food poisoning and also reduce stress and anxiety associated with shared use
- contact the Local Authority for advice about requirements for Houses in Multiple Occupation

# Falls

## Officers will...

**...check for even floor surfaces, steepness of staircases, adequate handrails/guarding and heights of windowsills. The assessment will include risk of falls in the garden/yard area and the routes into and out of the property.**

## Reducing the Hazard

- there must be adequate natural and artificial lighting in all rooms and to staircases
- guarding should be provided to stairs, landings and balconies. It should be at least 1100mm high and strong enough to support the weight of people leaning against it. There should be no openings to the guarding larger than 100mm. Guarding should be designed to discourage climbing by children.
- stairs should have a minimum width of 900mm to allow the stairs to be negotiated by a child and adult side by side
- tread lengths should be 280-360mm and riser heights should be 100 - 80mm. These should remain the same throughout the flight
- sturdy handrails should be sited 900-1000mm from the stair and should be easy to grasp and extend the full length of the flight
- there should be reasonable space at the top and bottom of any stairs, with no projections or sharp edges. It is not acceptable to have non safety glass doors located near the foot of a flight of stairs
- the headroom to stairs themselves should be a minimum of 2000mm
- floorboards should be laid to an even finish, and carpets and floor fittings should be in good repair and properly fitted
- all windows accessible to young children where there is a danger of a fall must have child resistant limiters which restrict opening of a window by no more than 100mm. These must be able to be overridden by an adult in case of emergency without the use of a key.
- where internal window sills are lower than 1100mm from the floor, safety glass and/or guarding should be provided
- outdoor paths and yards should be even and include adequate drainage

*Further Information: Building Regulations Approved Document K: protection from falling, collision and impact, Approved Document N: Glazing - safety in relation to impact, opening and cleaning, Approved Document B: fire safety, and British Standards BS 8213: Part 1, and BS6262.*

## Hot Surfaces



### Officers will...

...check the kitchen layout and space and whether a cooker is situated in a hazardous location, close to a door or through route. The rest of the property will be checked for exposed pipework. A typical accident involves someone falling and becoming trapped between furniture and a hot surface.

### Reducing the Hazard

- kitchens should be of adequate size and of such a layout so as to ensure that cookers are safely sited away from doors, through routes and other potentially hazardous areas (see 'Food Safety').
- where a cooker is provided, it should be in good working order and securely placed with an adjacent worktop.
- there should be adequate guarding of any open flame.
- the temperature of exposed surfaces of radiators, pipework, hot water tanks, taps, storage heaters, boilers and tanks should be limited to a maximum of 43°C, or be appropriately guarded.
- the best way to address risks from scalding is to limit the temperature delivered at taps. Thermostatic mixer valves can be fitted, and it is advised that water to baths is about 45°C. Kitchen sink taps should be limited to 60°C.
- contact the local authority for advice about requirements for Houses in Multiple Occupation.

*Further Information: Building Regulation Approved Document J, and British Standard BS4086, BS 1945 and BS 8423.*

## Security

### Officers will...

**...check that all external doors, gates and fences to the property and gardens are in good condition and secure against unauthorised entry**

### Reducing the Hazard

- the use of window locks, deadlocks, burglar alarms, security lights, window grilles, spy holes and chains on entrance doors can improve security
- tenants must have access to keys for all locks
- excess security measures can hamper means of escape in case of fire

*Further Information: British Standard BS 82200 Guide for security of buildings against crime - Part 1: Dwellings.*

## Overcrowding

### Officers will...

**...check that the property is an adequate size for the household**

### Reducing the Hazard

- there must be an adequate number of bedrooms for the people occupying the house - depending on room sizes, sex of occupants and relationship of occupants
- a property with one bedroom can generally be occupied by two people, and a property with two bedrooms by up to four people
- the kitchen, living area and bathrooms should be an adequate size for the household
- each bath, shower and WC should be in a bathroom with a lockable door
- contact the local authority for advice about requirements in Houses in Multiple Occupation

*Further Information: Unit Size and Layout sections of the Housing Quality Indicator system (ODPM), and publications such as Metric Handbook - Planning and Design Data*

*Have regard to Council HMO Amenity Standards*

# Personal Hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage



**Officers will...  
...check that there are  
adequate personal and  
clothes washing facilities.  
The officer will also check  
for adequate drainage  
including guttering.**

## Reducing the Hazard

- the WC or bathroom should have adequate heat, light and ventilation
- a wash hand basin with hot and cold water, should be provided in the same room as a WC
- each bath, shower, WC and wash hand basin should be stable and secure, and be able to be easily cleaned. WC's should have a working flush
- the bathroom should have a lockable door
- there should be supplies of hot and cold water over each sink
- there should be space for a washing machine with a power socket adjacent.
- there should be clothes drying facilities, preferably both outside and inside
- all water using facilities must be properly connected to adequate waste pipes carrying the waste to a drainage system. Each waste pipe should incorporate a trap to provide a water seal to prevent draughts and foul air entering the dwelling
- connections between WCs and the drain must be air-tight and adequately ventilated to avoid leakage of the foul sewage or smells. The system should be designed and constructed to ensure that pipes do not block
- contact the local authority for advice about requirements in Houses in Multiple Occupation.

*Further Information: Building Regulations Approved Document G: Hygiene, Approved Document H: Drainage and waste disposal*

# Domestic Hygiene, Pests and Refuse

## Officers will...

**...check that a property can be kept clean and hygienic**

### Reducing the Hazard

- the design, construction and maintenance of the dwelling, including kitchen and bathroom, should enable it to be kept clean
- walls, floors, ceilings and surfaces should be smooth and free from cracks to enable them to be easily cleaned the exterior of the property should be free from any cracks, holes or gaps larger than the diameter of a pencil in order to prevent access by pests, particularly around pipes and cables. The property should not provide harbourage for pests
- there should be suitable provision for the storage of refuse outside and inside the dwelling

*Further Information: Building Regulations Approved Document H and British Standard BS5906 Code of Practice for storage and on-site treatment of solid waste from buildings*

### Use of Amenities

## Officers will...

**...check for the risk of physical strain associated with functional space and other features such as windows and light fittings**

### Reducing the Hazard

- the layout of the dwelling, and in particular the kitchen and bathroom, should be convenient, safe and easy to use
- wash hand basins, sinks, worktops, WCs, baths and showers should be located at an appropriate height, and with sufficient free space to allow use without strain
- electrical sockets should be conveniently sited
- light switches should be sited next to door openings, at each end of staircases and corridors, and at a reasonable height
- door handles should be at a reasonable height and window catches should be readily accessible without strain
- cupboards and shelves should be sited where they can be easily reached

*Further Information: British Standard BS 8213, BS6465 Part 2, and BS 4467. Building Regulations Approved Document M addresses welfare and convenience for building users*

# Structural Collapse and Falling Elements

**Officers will...  
...check the dwelling for any disrepair that may result in a collapse or falling part either internally or externally**



## Reducing the Hazard

- the roof structure should be designed, constructed and maintained to be strong enough to support the weight of the covering, be securely fixed and to cope with adverse weather conditions. Roof coverings and chimney stacks/pots should be secure and maintained in good repair
- lintels should be of sufficient strength and be maintained in good repair. Door and window frames should be securely fixed and maintained
- all external pipework and gutters should be securely fixed and properly maintained
- any external cladding, rendering or similar finishing, and any coping, should be securely fixed and in good repair
- all external balconies and walkways should be designed, constructed and maintained to be capable of supporting their own weight and the imposed loads
- ceilings should be designed, constructed, fixed and maintained to be strong enough to remain intact
- internal walls should be designed, constructed and maintained to be strong enough to support their own weight and any reasonable loads
- floors and staircases should be designed, constructed and maintained to be of sufficient strength to support the weight of furniture, fixtures and fittings
- fixtures and fittings should be properly and securely fixed

*Further Information: Building Regulations Part A and Approved Documents A and F2.*



# Collision and Entrapment

## Officers will...

**...look for elements of the property that may cause injury, for example trapping fingers in doors or colliding with low ceilings**

## Reducing the Hazard

- openable windows should not project over pathways
- self-closers on doors should be adjusted so as not to slam
- doors and windows should be maintained in good repair
- safety glazing should be provided on doors and windows where necessary (see 'Falls')

*Further Information: Building Regulations Approved Document H and British Standard BS5906 Code of Practice for storage and on-site treatment of solid waste from buildings*

# Lighting

## Officers will...

**...check for sufficient and appropriate natural and artificial lighting throughout the property**

## Reducing the Hazard

- windows should be of adequate size, shape and position to allow daylight into rooms
- there should be adequate artificial lighting in all rooms throughout the property, especially rooms of limited natural lighting
- windows should be wide enough to provide a reasonable view of the immediate surroundings to allow supervision of outside recreation space; and a means of access to the dwelling

*Further Information: British Standard BS8206 Code of Practice Parts 1 and 2 and guides on lighting and windows published by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE).*

# Heat

## Officers will...

**...check for adequate ventilation to all rooms and unprotected or uncontrollable sources of heat**

## Reducing the Hazard

- there should be openable windows throughout the property and mechanical ventilation in bathrooms and kitchens controllable by the occupier
- the heating system should be programmable and controllable by the tenant (see 'Excess Cold')
- blinds or shuttering could be used if there is a large expanse of south facing windows

*Further Information: Building Regulation Approved Document L1: Conservation of fuel and power in dwellings, Approved Document F: Ventilation of buildings and the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) Guide A: Environmental design, and Guide B2: Ventilation and air conditioning.*

# Noise

## Officers will...

**...check for extreme or persistent noise within the property or garden. Noise can cause physical and mental health problems.**

## Reducing the Hazard

- double glazing, triple glazing, internal lobbies and sound insulation can help reduce external noise
- separating walls and floors, particularly in flats, should be properly constructed to reduce sound transmission

*Further Information: Building Regulations Approved Document E. However, in some circumstances, this standard may not be adequate to prevent indoor noise pollution. Other sources of information include the World Health Organization.*

**THIS BOOKLET IS AVAILABLE  
IN LARGER PRINT**



## Further information...

If you have any questions on this guidance or require further information please contact

**Residential Services, Environmental Health,  
Hambleton District Council, Civic Centre, Stone Cross,  
Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL6 2UU**

**01609 779977**

**[info@hambleton.gov.uk](mailto:info@hambleton.gov.uk)**

**[hambleton.gov.uk](http://hambleton.gov.uk)**

**HAMBLETON**  
**DISTRICT COUNCIL**

