

Students urged to be aware of fire safety

Students and their parents are urged to be aware of the dangers of fire. Fire safety advice could be one of the most important lessons for students during their time at university or college.

Smoke alarm and fire escape plan

Living away from home, especially if it's for the first time, can be very exciting and it's easy to get caught up in student life and forget about fire safety.

As parents inspect student accommodation to make sure it's suitable, they should also:

- make sure that premises are fire safe
- remind their children that fire safety checks should always be part of their routine

All students should take personal responsibility for looking after themselves and their housemates to protect them from the dangers of fire.

It's important to have a working smoke alarm fitted on each level of accommodation and to test them once a week. This will alert students and their housemates to the earliest stage of a fire, giving vital extra time to escape.

Students should follow a good fire safe bedtime routine – checking a few things before going to bed can reduce the risk of fire. It only takes a minute and could save lives.

Also, take some time to agree a fire escape plan to make sure everyone is clear what to do in the event of an emergency. This means knowing where the fire exits are and making sure furniture or stored items do not block them.

If there is no fire exit, plan an alternative escape route other than by the main entrance door.

A lot of students go home at weekends, so they should make sure that accommodation is safely secured and protected from the risk of fire. Make sure all electrical appliances not designed to be left on are disconnected, fully put out cigarettes, and close all doors.

You can find out more about fire safety at the pages below:

Student fire safety advice

Students should:

- test their smoke alarm every week
- prepare a fire escape plan
- carry out a night-time check
- turn off all electrical appliances not designed to be left on
- put a guard on open fires
- put out all cigarettes and empty ashtrays into a non-combustible container
- put out all candles
- close all internal doors
- don't leave cooking unattended
- not cook when under the influence of alcohol

Students should also check that the fire alarm system in their accommodation is working. If it is showing a fault, contact the landlord or the Estates Officer at the university immediately.

More useful links

Importance of getting eyes tested

Date published: 27 September 2018

It's National Eye Health Week (24 to 30 September). Everyone is being reminded of the importance of good eye health and of having their eyes tested every two years. Looking after your eyes is just as important as looking after the rest of your body.

Preventing damage and sight loss

More than 50 per cent of sight loss is preventable, so getting your eyes tested can help prevent, or limit, the damage caused by certain eye conditions.

Regular eye examinations are important because:

- having your vision corrected can improve the quality of day-to-day life
- they will help detect certain eye conditions such as cataracts, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration, which could lead to sight loss

- poor vision could be a risk factor for falls.

An optometrist may also be able to spot the signs of some broader health conditions with symptoms that affect the eyes, such as diabetes and [high blood pressure](#).

Eye examinations for children are vital to make sure that any visual problems such as squint, lazy eye (amblyopia) or short-sightedness (myopia) are detected and treated early.

Keeping eyes healthy

Other important steps people can take to help keep their eyes healthy include:

- [stopping smoking](#)
- protecting eyes in bright sunlight or glare
- [eating well](#) and taking regular exercise
- wearing safety goggles to protect eyes while doing DIY and/ or sporting activities
- wearing goggles when necessary in the workplace
- taking regular breaks if working at a computer screen

If you do notice a change to your sight, never dismiss it as ‘just part of getting older’ – visit your local optometrist immediately.

More useful links

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[Students encouraged to look after mental health](#)

Thousands of students are beginning a new term at college or university and they are being encouraged to look after their mental health. Students feeling down or under stress should talk to someone they trust and get support.

Stress and pressure

This is a really exciting time for students, but is also a period of huge change. New responsibilities can lead to feelings of stress, such as:

- living away from home
- moving into a new house
- making new friends
- starting a new course

Some students may also need to find a part-time job to help support their studies, which can be an added pressure.

A certain amount of stress is normal but it is really important that students know that looking after their mental health is just as important as looking after their physical health.

Information booklet for students

There is a [booklet for students](#) full of practical tips and information on:

- managing stress
- achieving and maintaining positive mental health and emotional well-being

The booklet covers topics such as money, body image, home life, feeling down, and family issues.

It also contains a list of helpful local organisations and websites which offer support.

The booklet is also available from students' unions.

Recognising potential warning signs

Untreated mental health problems can lead to self-harm and suicide.

Someone who's having suicidal thoughts may not ask for help, but that doesn't mean they don't want help and support. It can be difficult finding the words to express what they are feeling.

You can find out more about what to do if you think someone might be in need of immediate help on the [mental health emergency – if you're in crisis or despair page](#).

Lifeline

You can also talk to trained counsellors at any time by contact the crisis helpline Lifeline at:

More useful links

[Important to think about gas safety](#)

It's Gas Safety Week (18 to 24 September) and everyone is reminded to be 'gas safe'. Badly-fitted and poorly-serviced gas appliances can kill. Make sure all gas appliances are serviced by a Gas Safe Register engineer.

Check gas appliances

Incorrectly installed or maintained heating and cooking appliances can result in the leakage of carbon monoxide – an invisible, odourless poison, which can cause ill health or even death.

Every year, people suffer from preventable gas-related accidents, such as:

- gas leaks
- explosions
- fires
- carbon monoxide poisoning

The signs of carbon monoxide poisoning include: headaches, dizziness, breathlessness, nausea, collapse and loss of consciousness.

Checking appliances regularly for damage and having your boiler professionally-serviced regularly by a Gas Safe Register engineer could significantly reduce the risk of leaks by detecting problems early.

You can get more information at the link below:

If someone other than an engineer on the Gas Safe Register carries out gas work at your home, you could be risking the safety of your family and your property.

Tips for staying 'gas safe'

To ensure you stay 'gas safe' :

- only use a Gas Safe registered engineer to fit, fix or service gas appliances
- have your gas appliances safety checked every year (if you rent your home, make sure your landlord arranges this)
- ask to see your engineer's Gas Safe Register ID card and check both sides to make sure they are qualified for the work you need doing
- check for warning signs – lazy yellow or orange flames instead of crisp blue ones, black marks or stains on or around the appliance, and too

much condensation in the room could be signs your gas appliance is not working correctly

- fit a carbon monoxide alarm – choose an audible alarm which will alert you if there is carbon monoxide (CO) in your home

Gas leak

If you smell gas and think you have a gas leak in your home make sure you:

- call the 24-hour gas emergency number on 0800 002 001, or if there's a risk to life call 999
- shut off the gas supply at the meter control valve
- open all doors and windows for ventilation
- put out all naked flames
- check gas appliances to see if the gas has been left on unlit or that a pilot is out
- go outside into fresh air

Do not:

- turn any electrical switches, including door entry systems, on or off
- use matches, light naked flames, or smoke
- leave it to someone else to call the emergency services

For all reports of 'smell of gas in cellar':

- do not enter the cellar
- evacuate the entire premises

To turn off your gas supply, you first need to locate the gas isolation valve. In more modern houses, the gas meter and isolation valve are often located outside in a meter box.

More useful links

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[Rates discount deadline for landlords](#)

If you're a landlord, you may be eligible for a discount on your rate bills, but time is running out. Bills should be paid in full by Friday 28 September in order to receive an allowance deduction on your bill.

Allowance

If you have an Article 20 or Article 21 rate account and are responsible for the rates on one or more rental properties which are occupied by tenants, you may be entitled to an allowance of 10 per cent. This is paid by way of a discount on your rate bill.

This discount does not include your residential address, second homes, or personal holiday homes.

If you have a property where the tenant is currently liable for the rates, [you can sign up to a formal agreement](#) for them to pay the rates on the property.

For more information, see the page below:

How to pay

You should allow a minimum of five working days for any payment to reach Land & Property Services (LPS) – this includes if you pay at a Post Office.

You can [pay your rates online](#) or by phone on 0300 200 7801 (choose option one).

Difficulty paying and arrears

Landlords having difficulty paying their rate bill should contact LPS as soon as possible on:

It may be possible to discuss alternative payment arrangements to avoid LPS taking legal debt recovery action.

LPS is actively pursuing landlord accounts with rate arrears. LPS is willing to help any landlord in arrears by agreeing mutually acceptable payment arrangements that could allow a discount to be awarded for current year rates.

More useful links