

# Private tenants: smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

**This factsheet looks at the duty of your private landlord to provide working alarms to protect you from the dangers of fire and carbon monoxide**

If you rent your home from a private landlord, they must provide a:

- smoke alarm on each floor of your home
- carbon monoxide (CO) detector in any room with a solid fuel appliance (solid fuels include coal and wood).

If you are a new tenant, your landlord should check that all alarms are working at the start of your tenancy. These duties do not apply if you live in the same house as your landlord.

## Smoke alarms

A working smoke alarm can save your life by giving an early warning of fire. Around 35 people die every year because their alarm didn't work.

Your local fire and rescue service can give you advice on fire safety in the home.

It is your landlord's duty to install a working smoke alarm on every floor of your home and it is your responsibility to check it on a regular basis. Test it by pressing the button until the alarm sounds. If there is no sound, a:

- standard battery-powered alarm needs a new battery
- ten-year sealed battery-powered alarm needs to be completely replaced
- mains-powered alarm may need replacing by an electrician.

If an alarm stops working, contact your landlord so they can arrange for the necessary repair or replacement.

## Specialist alarms if you are deaf

Your landlord does not have to provide specialist alarms if you are deaf or hard of hearing. You can contact Action on Hearing Loss on **03330 144 525** or textphone **03330 144 530** for information about alarms that alert you through vibration or flashing light.

## Carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odourless gas that can make you ill or even kill you. CO poisoning can be a result of:

- poorly maintained gas appliances
- incomplete burning of solid fuel
- poor ventilation in the home which allows CO to build up.

To prevent CO poisoning, your landlord must:

- ensure gas appliances are serviced annually by a Gas Safe engineer
- provide a CO detector in every room containing a solid fuel burner.

## Symptoms of CO poisoning

The initial symptoms of CO poisoning are often similar to flu – for example, dizziness, headaches, and nausea. Long term exposure can cause serious health problems, even paralysis and brain damage.

If you think you are at risk, switch off any appliance that could be faulty and open doors and windows to ventilate the room. Do not sleep in it. Report the problem to your landlord as soon as possible and don't re-light any appliance until it has been checked by a qualified person. Visit your GP urgently for a blood test.

## Houses in multiple occupation

If you live in a licensed house in multiple occupation (HMO) your landlord must provide smoke alarms and keep them in working order. Gas appliances must be checked every year and your landlord must provide a certificate to prove this has been done. HMOs licensed after 1 October 2015 must have CO detectors in every room containing a solid fuel appliance.

## What can your council do?

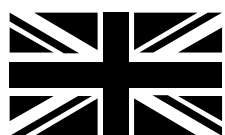
Contact your local council if your landlord does not provide a working smoke alarm or CO detector. The council will serve a notice telling your landlord to comply with the law within 28 days, and can carry out necessary urgent works.

Your council's environmental health department can also help you if your home contains other hazards to your health, such as faulty wiring or blocked fire escapes.

## Further advice

You can get further advice from Shelter's free\* housing advice helpline (**0808 800 4444**), a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice office, or by visiting [shelter.org.uk/advice](http://shelter.org.uk/advice) or [adviceguide.org.uk](http://adviceguide.org.uk)

\*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



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