



Wexford County Council **Home Maintenance** **Handbook for Tenants**



Contents

1: About this handbook	2	8: Alterations – make sure you ask first.....	19
2: Welcome to your new home	3	9: How to deal with condensation.....	23
3: Repairs and maintenance: Who does what	5	10: Chimneys, oil tanks and stoves..	24
4: How we classify repair requests.....	7	11: Transferring – what you need to know	27
5: What you are responsible for.....	9	12: Health and safety.....	28
6: What the Council is responsible for.....	16	Appendix 1 Your Home Fire Safety Checklist	33
7: You must pay for what you damage.....	17		



01

1: About this handbook

You are now a tenant of Wexford County Council, the local Housing Authority for all of county Wexford. This handbook tells you about:

- your role and responsibilities as our tenant
- our role and responsibilities and the services we offer
- what you can and cannot do to the property as a tenant
- the rules and standards you must accept as a Council tenant

Consider this handbook as a guide to our services rather than a legal document. You will have to sign a Tenancy Agreement before you move into your home and that clearly sets out your legal position.

It's a good idea to keep this handbook in a safe place so you can refer to it whenever you need to.

What do you think?

To deliver a quality service, we need your input. Please contact us and let us know your views.

- **Write to us at:** Housing and Community Department, Wexford County Council, County Hall, Carricklawn, Wexford Y35WY93.
- **Drop in to:** Housing and Community Department, Block E, Wexford County Council, Carricklawn, Wexford.
- **Phone us on:** 053 919 6000 or email: customerservice@wexfordcoco.ie
- **Email:** customerservice@wexfordcoco.ie

Your personal data

We promise that the personal data you provide to our Housing Section will be processed as set out in the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Acts.

You can find full details of Wexford County Council's Privacy Policy on our website www.wexfordcoco.ie

2: Welcome to your new home

Wexford County Council would like to welcome you as our new tenant. The property we are going to rent to you will become your home.

Before you move in

Before we give you the keys to your new home, we need you to come to this meeting. We will explain your responsibilities as a tenant and we will also outline our responsibilities as your new landlord.

All new tenants must attend a pre-tenancy meeting. So must tenants transferring to us from other local authority homes. It's a really good opportunity for you to meet us and ask any questions you may have.

Remember: We're here to help you.

Moving in checklist

There are a few things you should do before you move in to your new home.



Before you move in:

- Contact your power supplier to check that you are connected, and that the account is in your name. You need to do this because the Council will contact the existing supplier within a week of the start of your tenancy to inform them that Wexford Co Council is no longer responsible to pay the charges.
- Ask us for permission if you are putting up a TV Satellite dish, as we need to make sure this won't cause structural damage to the property.
- Notify An Post (the postal service) that you have changed address.
- Update the Electoral Register so you are registered to vote at your new address. Go to checktheregister.ie and see if are registered.
- Organise household contents insurance against fire, theft and accidental damage like flood and water damage. (The Council will only insure the structure of the building.)
- Organise a method of waste disposal when you move in. You may be asked to provide proof of this collection. You need any of the following four proofs, keep them to hand:
 - receipts from a Civic Amenity Site such as Holmestown Waste Management Facility
 - bin collector details
 - form signed giving consent to share a bin
 - receipts from a compactor

See section 5. What am I responsible for? for more information on waste disposal.

Sometimes, the water may be turned off when you first arrive at your new home. This will have been done to prevent burst pipes from damaging your home while no one was living there. You should be able to turn the water supply back on at the stop cock, which is usually located outside where the mains water pipe enters the building.

3: Repairs and maintenance: Who does what

As our tenant, you share responsibility for repairs and maintenance with us. This is set out clearly in the tenancy agreement you must sign before you get the keys to your home.

Our Housing Maintenance Section

This section is responsible for managing and repairing the Council's rented housing stock, which includes your home.

Rent needs to be up to date

Any time you ask us to make a repair to your home, we check your rent account. We will only provide you with a full maintenance service if your rent account is up to date.

What we do – and what you do

We are responsible for structural, major plumbing and electrical repairs. You are responsible for all other regular maintenance to your home. We explain more about responsibilities in the next two chapters.

Our Housing Maintenance Section will help you answer your request for housing repairs you have. It will forward requests to our maintenance crews.

If you need to notify the Council of maintenance problems in your home, phone our lo-call number 1890 787 878 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday or email customerservice@wexfordcoco.ie. In an emergency outside of these hours, call 1890 666 777.

Leave your phone number

If you make a request for maintenance or repair, make sure you leave a contact phone number so that the maintenance crew can contact you before they come to your home.

You can also make a maintenance request by calling to our offices.

How do we classify requests?

We list all requests for repairs or maintenance on our system and classify them as:

- emergency
- urgent
- routine.



They are then forwarded to our maintenance supervisor who, if necessary, allocates each job to one of our maintenance crews.



4: How we classify repair requests

We aim to provide a fast and effective repair service to you and other tenants. To achieve this within the limited budget and fulfil our obligations to our tenants, we prioritise repairs depending on how urgent we think they are. See table on next page.

Remember: Make all normal requests for repairs and maintenance to 1890 787 878 or email customerservice@wexfordcoco.ie

In an emergency, the outside office hours number is 1890 666 777. Only emergency repairs will be carried out after hours.

Note: Before you request a repair, check the list in the following chapter to see whether the repair is your responsibility or the Council's.



Category class:	Example of repairs	Likely response time
Emergency Where we think there is a potential risk to human life.	Electrical fault such as smoke or sparks from electric fixtures Burst water tanks or serious roof and ceiling leaks or collapse	Within 24 hours
Urgent Where we think there is the potential for damage to the property.	Heating and immersion not working Leaking sinks, pipes, radiators or toilets. General electrical problems – sockets such as light fixtures not working.	Within 5 working days
Routine Routine repairs are general house repairs. We do them whenever finance is available.	Leaking gutters Leaking door panels Broken gutters or drain pipes	Within 12 weeks
Planned maintenance	Replacing windows and doors, painting, exteriors or repairing driveways or footpaths	Depends on central government funding
Energy upgrades	Upgrading insulation and heating	Depends on central government funding



5: What you are responsible for

This section tells you what you are responsible for inside and outside your home. It also tells you about your responsibilities.

Inside

Inside your home, you have responsibilities for:

✓	plumbing and bathroom
✓	heating system
✓	finishes (cracks in walls and so on)
✓	electrical repairs
✓	general repairs

Plumbing and bathroom

As a tenant, you must:

- seal shower tray and bath edges
- maintain the central heating system – if you installed it
- make sure no disposable nappies, baby wipes or sanitary protection are flushed down toilets. If you do not do this and they cause a blockage, you may be charged for clearing it
- pay for any damage to baths, sinks, toilets and cisterns which would not be considered normal wear and tear



- pay to replace or repair toilet seats and handles
- remove all blockages from sinks, kitchens, baths and showers and
- remove limescale from any electric showers provided by the Council

You must also:

- repair and maintain the shower – if you installed it
- repair any damage to floor coverings caused by a water leak
- repair the flushing mechanism on your toilet
- repair and maintain bathroom extractor fan
- replace and repair shower doors
- replace or repair faulty sink or bath stoppers and chains and
- repair or replace splash back tiling on baths, showers and sinks

Please note that you must have our written permission before you can install a shower unit, and what you propose to install must meet our standards.

Heating system

As a tenant, it's your responsibility to:

- replace fire cheeks (fire surrounds) or stove glass and seals

- maintain adequate heating and ventilation to prevent condensation,
- repair the fireplace if it is coming away from the wall
- clear any air locks in the heating system
- release air locks in pipes and make sure that any air locks caused by the boiler running out of oil are properly vented by a competent person insured to do this

Please note that, if you have oil central heating, you are not allowed to fit a monitoring device to any tank provided by the Council which does not come with a built-in monitor. This is to prevent you causing damage to the tank. Also, you should avoid tilting or moving your oil tank as this puts debris (pieces of material) into the burner and can cause serious damage to your heating system (see page 25).

Please note that you must have written permission from us before you can install a new heating system or change the heating system already there.

Finishes

It's up to you as our tenant to:

- repair internal plaster cracks
- repair or replace any damaged or missing wall, shower, floor and fire tiles



- repair internal woodwork such as floors, skirting boards and hot press doors
- replace any flooring damaged by leaks
- decorate inside your home, using anti-mould paint where it's needed
- provide curtain rails and window boards
- repaint any discoloured ceilings or walls after water leaks

Electrical repairs

You must:

- replace all bulbs
- replace fuses, except main fuses
- repair any appliances that you install, including electric fires and heaters not installed by the Council
- make sure you do not overload sockets

The Council takes no responsibility for wiring to sheds or any other wiring installed by the tenant.

Please note it is an offence to change electrical circuits, circuit boards or wiring unless you are a registered electrician.

Kitchen

You must maintain and repair:

- kitchen cupboards, kitchen unit doors, work tops and hinges
- the extractor fan in your kitchen

As part of your general maintenance responsibilities, you must:

- sweep your chimney (see fire prevention information on page 31)
- maintain and repair air vent covers and make sure these are not blocked (see notes on condensation on page 23)
- repair any damage caused by condensation (see notes on condensation)
- maintain your heat and smoke detectors (this includes changing batteries)
- make sure you do not interfere with the attic insulation — for example, do not interfere with floor attic space
- oil outside door locks and hinges
- make sure your letter box is in working order



Outside

Outside your home, you have responsibilities for:

✓	the garden (if you have one)
✓	satellite TV dishes and aerials
✓	windows and doors
✓	gullies, gutters and downpipes
✓	general repairs

Garden

In the garden, you must:

- maintain your garden, hedges, fences and garden boundary walls
- cut the grass in your front and back gardens regularly
- make sure that your front, side and back gates work properly
- maintain any garden sheds or fuel sheds provided by the Council

Satellite TV dishes and aerials

You will be responsible for any damage caused to the outside of your home by people you allow to put up satellite dishes or TV aerials. We recommend that you use a registered and properly insured installer such as SKY, Virgin and so on. If the Council has to repair damage caused to your home by a dish or aerial installer, you may have to pay for this.

You should never attach a satellite dish or TV aerial to your chimney as it can make the chimney unstable.

Windows and doors

You must replace (or maintain):

- broken glass
- damaged locks, hinges, handles, catches and restrictors on outside doors and windows
- missing keys for outside doors, and
- draught-proofing on windows and doors

You must also regularly paint the timberwork on your windows.

Gutters, gullies and downpipes

You are responsible for making sure:

- your gutters and downpipes are not blocked with leaves or other debris
- your rainwater gully traps are kept clear

General

As part of your responsibilities as a Council tenant, you are expected to:

- make sure rubbish is never stored for longer than is necessary in your house or garden
- keep external paintwork in good order
- maintain and repair electricity and phone cabinets
- control pests (see notes on vermin, page 17)
- arrange all phone and broadband connections

Waste Disposal

It is your responsibility to follow the relevant laws (Waste Prevention Bye-Laws). This guide will help you to do that.

How to manage your bins

You have 3 choices in the way you get rid of your waste. You can:

1. take part in a household waste collection service run by an authorised waste collector. For example: AES, Greenstar, and Ray Whelan Ltd.
2. bring your waste to a Civic Amenity Site or other authorised facility. For example: Holmestown Waste Management Facility
3. share a bin with another household

An inspector will call

Similar to a TV licence, inspectors will soon call to households who do not have a contract with an authorised bin company. If a household doesn't have proper waste arrangements in place, they will face a €75 fixed fine. To avoid prosecution, you need to pay this within 21 days if you get such a notice.

You may be asked to provide proof of the way you get rid of your waste.



You need any of the following four proofs, keep them safely:

- receipts of Civic Amenity site such Holmestown Waste Management Facility
- bin collector details
- form signed giving consent to share a bin
- receipts from a compactor

On bin collection day

Please make sure that you put your bin out after 7pm the day before it is due to be collected and take it in by 9am the day of the collection.

On the day the bin is being collected, you **must not**:

- overload the bin
- place bags on or beside the bin
- include hazardous waste and electrical and electronic equipment

Please bring all hazardous waste and electronic equipment to your local Civic Amenity Site.

Hazardous waste (some examples)	Electronic equipment (some examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• batteries• cooking or engine oil• paints• aerosols	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TVs• computer monitors• printers• cables

You are responsible for keeping your wheelie bin in good condition and in a location where it doesn't cause any problems for your neighbours.

We ask you to please allow bin collectors to do their jobs and be a good neighbour and not add rubbish to a neighbour's bin without permission.

Recycling – what waste goes where

We are all responsible for the environment and recycling effectively is essential. MyWaste.ie is a great website for information on what materials can be recycled.

Why should items be placed loosely in the bin?

Your mixed recycle bin is sorted into different categories for recycling. If you have placed items inside one another, the machines will not be able to sort them and unwanted items such as food or nappies can enter the system while precious resources are lost.



What about Glass?

Glass does not go in the household recycling bin. It should be collected and placed in glass/bottle banks as the separate collection of glass produces the highest quality recycled glass. Glass is 100% recyclable.

Glass can be recycled repeatedly without losing any of its properties.

Not all glassware can be put in glass banks such as cookware, Pyrex, plates, cups and ceramics as they have a different melting point to traditional glass.

The metal or plastic lids of glass items can be placed in the recycling bin.

Household Recycling Do's & Don'ts

Clean ✓



Dirty ✗



Dry ✓



Wet ✗



Loose ✓



Packed ✗



Your recycling list!



Tins & Cans



Rigid Plastic



Paper & Cardboard

www.recyclinglistireland.ie

   #RecyclingListIRL



06

6: What the Council is responsible for

This section tells you what we are responsible for inside and outside your home.

Inside your home

We will:

- replace or repair electrical sockets and ceiling roses
- repair electrical and fixed heating systems installed by the Council
- replace hot water cylinder, immersion and attic tanks
- maintain and repair electric showers if they have been supplied by the Council

Other repairs we will do:

- structural repairs to ceilings
- staircases if the issue is due to structural error

Outside your home

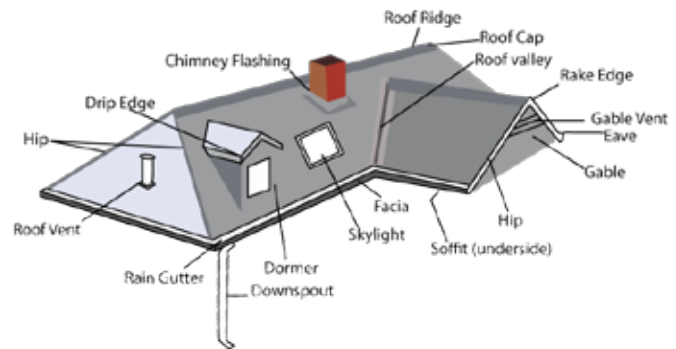
We will:

- repair broken downpipes or downpipe fixtures

- replace external windows, doors, screens and frames
- replace gutters, downpipes, fascias, soffits and bargeboards
- repair the structure of your roof, including repairs to roof parts: tiles and slates after a storm, ridge cappings and barge, fascias and soffits, battens and felt, roof vents, rafters and joists, purlins and collar ties
- make structural repairs to your chimney (if you have one)

We will also:

- maintain your drainage system. This includes cleaning of septic tanks – if necessary
- repair burst pipes caused by frost or freezing temperatures



7: You must pay for what you damage

You will have to pay the cost of repairing any wilful or malicious damage to your home. You will also have pay to fix any damage caused by any work that you carried out or got somebody to carry out for you.

The Council decides who is responsible for repair or maintenance works not set out in this handbook.

Repair of electrical or gas fitting or installation

If you need to repair an electrical or gas fitting or installation, you must make sure the work is carried out by a qualified electrician or gas fitter.

Anyone you allow to do electrical work in your home must be an REC (registered electrical contractor) and be able to give you REC certificate to show the work meets the right standards of safety.

Anyone you allow to work on your gas connection or system must be an RGI (registered gas installer)

who can provide you with a completion certificate. You must send or bring your certificates of completion to the Housing Maintenance Section after the work is finished.

Repair of plumbing problem

Plumbing work in your home can only be carried out by a qualified and competent plumber.

What the Council does not pay for

Please remember that we will not pay to repair your home if you have:

- caused the damage or allowed it to be caused
- made unapproved alterations to your home
- neglected to maintain your home

Vermin

You are responsible for getting rid of vermin such as rats, mice, ants and wasps from your home or garden. It is up to you to make contact with a reputable pest control company to do this.

Insurance

The Council does **not** insure the contents of your home.



We strongly advise you to take out your own household insurance. Even a minor leak or fire can cause devastating damage to property. We do not

insure your furniture, floor coverings, belongings or decorations against theft, fire, vandalism, burst pipes and other risks.



8: Alterations – make sure you ask first

You must get the Council's approval before you make even minor structural alterations (changes) to your home. You have agreed to this in your tenancy agreement.

Permission and safety

The Council will only give you permission if you can show them that it is safe for you, to arrange these works yourself.

We will not refuse permission without a good reason, and we will explain our reasons to you.

But always remember, you must get permission in writing **before** work starts. If we refuse permission or set down conditions that you must accept, you will have to accept these. Otherwise, you will be in breach of your tenancy.

Unauthorised changes

If you go ahead with unauthorised alterations, and don't, within 21 days of being asked to, reverse the changes, we may do this. We can enter your home and restore it to how it was before you began work. If we have to do this, we will pass the full cost of doing the work on to you.

Written permission needed

You must get written permission from us if you want to:

- erect a shed, a wall, gates and boundary walls
- change the electrics, plumbing or gas systems in any way. (This includes running electrical lines to external sheds which are not part of the original house wiring system or installing a gas fire.)
- install a stove (see page 25)
- take out or change kitchen units or bathroom fittings
- install a shower
- move radiators or install your own central heating



You must never build on your boundary walls, nor must you use them to support a shed or any other kind of structure. They are not built to support extra weight and may collapse.

Changes never allowed

You must never make the following alterations without permission:

- make changes to MCB Board (fuse board)
- convert your attic space — we can make you pay the full costs of undoing the conversion
- interfere with structural roof timbers
- remove or alter any internal walls
- concrete any area in your front or rear garden

Permission for structural changes

If you want to apply for permission to make structural alterations, you must give the Housing Department:

- details of the extent of work you are proposing
- drawings to include plans, elevation and sections of the work you want to do
- a statement from the designer or architect confirming that your proposal complies with our building regulations
- a statement from the designer or architect outlining what planning permission will be needed and applied for

- details of the contractor who will carry out the work, including details of their insurance

The Council will not consider your application until it has all these details.

Installing goods and fittings

If you buy goods intending to fit them yourself, or to ask the council to fit them for you, the Housing Department will not install them for you.

This includes items like:

- pre-packaged kitchens
- windows or doors
- gas cookers (must be fitted by certified fitter)
- gates

Remember that you are responsible for any improvements that you make to your home. If you leave or hand back your keys, your tenancy, you will not be able to recover the cost of these improvements.

Electricity supply and heating and ventilation

When you begin your tenancy, your house will have an electricity supply. You are responsible for making contact with an electricity supplier to give them an **initial meter reading** so they can open an account in your name.

If the electricity supplier asks for a 'new customer' deposit, you will have to pay this.

If you decide to switch to a 'pay as you use card' supplier, you must ask the Housing Maintenance Section for permission to do this. If you move out of your property, you should contact your supplier with a closing meter reading to close your account.

Energy efficient houses: As Wexford County Council moves towards more environmentally-friendly and efficient houses, you may be allocated a house with a heating and ventilation system that you're not used to. If you are allocated one of these energy-efficient houses, we will show you how to operate the heating system before you move in. We will pre-set your home to the most efficient heating format and we will explain to you what this means.

Under no circumstances should you interfere with or allow others to access the controls without getting advice from our engineer.

Energy improvements

We carry out work to improve the energy efficiency of our Council homes every year.

These improvements include:

- putting up external insulation
- upgrading heating systems (including controls)
- replacing windows and doors
- improving ventilation
- erecting solar or PV (photovoltaic) panels
- insulating walls and attics

If your house has been or is going to be upgraded with external wall insulation, you might like to know about the benefits this brings. It will:

- save you money on heating bills
- improve the energy efficiency in your home
- reduce condensation
- prevent damp and mould
- make your home more comfortable
- improve the look of a building
- reduce the amount of maintenance your home needs
- help the environment by ensuring that you burn less fossil fuel

External insulation is designed to be almost maintenance-free and self-cleaning. You won't need to paint it and it should last for at least 25 years. If it gets grubby, don't power wash it – just wash it with warm water.



Prohibited to fix certain items to walls

To protect the walls of your home, you are **not allowed** to drill holes or make nail holes to fix any of the following items to walls:

- hanging baskets
- handrails or grab rails
- digital TV dishes
- equipment for cable and broadband services
- bulkhead or sensor lights
- hose wheels
- outside taps
- vents or extractor vents
- maintenance on downpipes
- alarm boxes
- house number plates

If you feel you need to fix an object to a wall, contact our Housing Maintenance Section on 1890 78 78 78.

Other rules

- Ball games: Do not play ball games against house or boundary walls
- Ladders: Be careful using ladders against externally insulated walls. You can easily damage the insulation surface if the ladder has a sharp or angled edge
- Damaged cracks externally: If you have any damaged areas or large cracks in your external insulation, please contact the Housing Maintenance Section on 1890 78 78 78

Showers over baths: You are not allowed to place an electric shower over a bath as this can cause major problems. We may remove these types of showers for any of the following reasons:

- poor installation
- leaking
- ineffective shower curtains or screens
- the danger of slips and falls
- wiring not up to standard
- bath not suited for use as a shower base
- broken seals around the bath leading to leaks

9: How to deal with condensation

If you complain to us about condensation in your home, we will send you a useful booklet that will tell you how to deal with the problem. We will only visit your home to inspect the damp areas if we believe you have tried the solutions described in the booklet.

We usually allow you at least 6 months to solve the problem before we will call to your home to inspect it.

Ventilate your home

You are responsible for making sure that your home is ventilated to prevent moisture from building up inside and mould developing.

If there is any damage to your home due to condensation and mould, you are responsible for repairing any damage and preventing it from happening again.

Main causes of condensation

The main causes of condensation are:

- not opening windows, especially in bathrooms
- keeping window vents permanently closed
- drying clothes in rooms with the windows closed

Avoid condensation

You will avoid a build-up of condensation if you:

- make sure that air vents are clear and open to allow air to flow into a room
- avoid, as much as possible, drying clothes indoors
- keep your curtain lengths above floor level so as to allow air to circulate
- make sure your tumble dryer (if you use one) is the condenser-type. This will minimise the moisture it releases



10

10: Chimneys, oil tanks and stoves

Chimney cleaning

Get your chimney cleaned regularly. We recommend you have it swept as follows:

- wood-burning fires — 2 times a year when in regular use
- solid fuel fires — once a year if you burn smokeless fuel, twice a year if you use coal
- oil burners — once a year
- gas fires — once a year if designed for sweeping
- stoves — twice a year

Make sure that whoever cleans your chimney is: qualified

- insured to do the job
- tax-compliant
- willing to give you a receipt on headed paper

If we need to do repair work to your chimney, you will need to have it cleaned before we start. We will ask you for a receipt to prove you have done this.

If our Housing Maintenance Section has to do structural repairs on your chimney, they will send you with a certificate which you should show to the person cleaning your chimney. This certificate will have cleaning instructions showing how to prevent further damage to the flue.

We will place an extra copy of this certificate and instructions in or near your fuse box. If you burn solid fuel, avoid using wet timber as it can harm your chimney.

Fire brigade charges

It is important to clean and maintain your chimney because if the fire brigade have to call to your home to put out a chimney fire, you will have to pay the call out charge.



You may also have to pay a substantial bill if your chimney is damaged in a fire that could have been avoided by keeping it clean. If we have to repair your chimney because of a chimney fire, we may charge you for the repairs we have to make.

Oil tanks

If your home has oil-fired heating, you must not interfere with any part of it.

For example, you must never:

- tilt or prop the tank as this can cause damage to the pipe work and allow dirt from the floor of the tank to enter the system
- set up your own 'homemade' system which disconnects the main tank provided to you
- spill oil when topping up your oil tank
- interfere with any straps which hold the tank in place

If we find that you have raised or tilted your oil tank, we may refuse to respond to your maintenance request. If we have to make a repair, we may charge you for the call out and for the repairs we have to make.

In you have, or suspect you might have, an oil leak phone the Council on 1890 78 78 78.

Stoves

You must get **written permission** from the Council's Housing Maintenance Section before you install a stove into your home.

A poorly-fitted stove will put you and your family at risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. A stove burns significantly hotter than an open fire and the flue liners inside your chimney may not be able to cope with the increase in temperature. If that happens, the liner may crack and break up. This is dangerous because it can cause a chimney fire or allow poisonous carbon monoxide to leak through damaged liners into your home.

You are 10 times more likely to suffer from a carbon monoxide leak or a chimney fire if your stove is not properly fitted.

If you choose to install your own stove, you **must**:

- have approval from the Housing Maintenance Section
- give a Compliance cert signed by a registered installer to the Housing Maintenance Section from the installer after the stove has been fitted
- arrange to have a survey of your chimney by a registered inspection company to ensure that it is suitable before the stove is installed (this costs up to €300)



- be able to show that the chimney flue is completely lined
- install a carbon monoxide alarm

If the Council Housing Maintenance Department allows you to install a stove, you are responsible for all stove and chimney repairs from the date it was installed.

If your house has a stove already installed, this will have been done by a fully qualified installer who is certified and registered. You should never interfere with the stove or alter it in any way.

You should only use the type of fuel that your stove has been designed to burn. Some stoves burn only wood, while others are multi-fuel, which means they can burn special coal and wood. Burning the wrong fuel and rubbish will block up the flue and increase the danger of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

Do not burn the following in your stove:

- household rubbish which could produce a variety of toxic emissions
- disposable nappies
- green or wet wood which won't give off heat but will produce a lot of smoke and creosote (a very dangerous by-product of burning wood)
- metals or plastics
- glossy or coloured papers (magazine pages, product packaging)
- painted or varnished wood, trim or other wood by-products
- driftwood — salt water driftwood is corrosive and can produce toxic fumes, while fresh water driftwood may contain silt and gravel
- Styrofoam containers such as disposable cups, plates or food packaging

Many of these will produce hazardous fumes indoors, as well as chimney emissions that can be harmful to others and to the environment. Some are also additional risks to your stove and can create a dangerous build-up of creosote in your chimney.



11: Transferring – what you need to know

If you have been successfully approved for a transfer and plan to leave your home, we will agree a time with you to send our inspector to check the condition of the property. After the inspection, we tell you if any work needs to be done to bring the property back up to standard.

We expect that your home will probably show signs of normal wear and tear and we will take that into account.

What we expect

If you are going to transfer or leave your home, we expect you to leave your home in a fit and proper state.

This means you need to remove:

- all rubbish, furniture and bins
- all carpets, lino and other flooring — unless you have a special agreement with the Council
- all decking outside the property — without burning it.
- contents of sheds and attics

We also expect you to:

- restore the gardens, pathways and entrances to their original condition
- empty and clean all presses, drawers, doors sinks, baths and toilets
- repair any damage, such as holes made to support shelves or hang pictures or ornaments
- have the chimney swept (if necessary)

Important: Before you can take up a housing transfer, you must agree that you will pay the cost of any extra repairs or cleaning that the Council has to do — over and above normal pre-letting repairs. If you need to, you can add this charge to the rent you will pay over the following year.



12

12: Health and safety

As our tenant, you are responsible for making sure you provide a safe and tidy workplace for any workers we send to your home. We will need this to carry out routine repairs, maintenance work or any remedial work we think is necessary. We expect the following conditions to be respected.

General

- The work area must be clean and tidy before work starts
- Young children must not be allowed to access the work area or be left unattended in your home during repair works
- All pets must be controlled and kept clear of the works area
- You must comply with all reasonable instructions given by the Council or the repair team. Remember: these are given to keep the place safe for you and your family, the council staff and contractors during repair works
- Your home now is a place of work and so smoking is prohibited

Talk to us

- All communication between you, your family members and Council staff or contractors must be conducted in a respectful and calm manner
- You must tell Council staff or contractors about any hidden hazard or risk before they start work
- Tell Council staff before they start work if anybody in your home has a medical condition that is likely to be affected by the work they will carry out

Important phone numbers:

- To notify the Housing Maintenance Section about missing or damaged valve or manhole covers, phone 1 890 78 78 78.
- To notify Irish Water about a problem with your water supply, ring Irish Water on 1 850 278 278 or 01 707 2828.



Fire safety

Smoke alarms give you early warning of a fire in your home. **In homes where fire fatalities happened, 8 out of 10 did not have a working smoke alarm.**

Fit a smoke alarm to the centre of the hallway ceiling and to the centre of each upper floor landing ceiling.

Fit a smoke alarm in every room (except bathrooms) to protect your home. Fit a heat alarm in the kitchen.

Test your smoke alarms at least once a week.

Change the battery right away when you hear the warning beep.

Escape plans

Know what to do when you hear a smoke alarm so you and your family can get out safely.

Make an escape plan and practise with everyone who lives with you.

Plan at least two ways out in case one way is blocked by fire or smoke.

Have a meeting point in a safe place outside the house.

Keep your way out clear day and night. Keep the keys to doors and windows nearby.

Know where the nearest phone is to call the fire service.

If you hear the fire alarm, check doors with the back of your hand for heat before you open them.

If they are warm, the way might be blocked by fire.

Do not:

Go back into a burning house for any reason.

Make a plan to go to the safest place in case you cannot get out of the building.

Make sure there is a phone or personal alert in the room to call for help.

Make sure there is a window so you can either get out or call for help. Stay by the window if you can't get out.

Close the door and seal the bottom with towels or blankets to stop smoke getting in.



Routine fire safety check

Every night:

- Turn off all non-essential electrical appliances.
- Do not leave any electrical equipment charging.
- Turn off gas appliances.
- Put out candles and naked flames.
- Place a spark guard in front of open fires.
- Empty all ashtrays.
- Keep your way out completely clear.
- Close all doors.



To prevent a fire

Avoid:

- Smoking when you are in bed, tired or on medication.
- Leaving the room when there are candles burning.
- Leaving young children alone near an open fire or cooker.
- Leaving your mobile phone or laptop on your bed or couch. These devices heat up quickly when even slightly covered over.
- Leaving matches and lighters where children can get them.
- Leaving the room when a chip or frying pan is on, even for a minute.
- Overloading electric sockets – one socket, one plug.
- Using electric appliances that don't work.
- Running electrical appliances from a light socket.
- Using a heater or the cooker to dry clothes
- Using petrol or paraffin to light a solid fuel stove.
- Borrowing batteries from the smoke alarm.
- Having mirrors over fire places with real fires. Your clothes might catch fire if you stand too close to look in the mirror.

Make sure to:

- Check your house for electrical devices left on. Only leave on essential electrical equipment at night such as the fridge.
- Charge or use devices like phones and laptops on a solid surface that will not burn easily.
- Clean your chimney and service your heating system at least once a year.
- Use a spark guard in front of open fires.
- Keep your gas cylinder outside, on solid ground and away from anything hot.
- Use a proper holder for candles.
- Keep a suitable fire extinguisher and fire blanket in the kitchen.
- Empty ashtrays before you go to bed. Run the contents under the tap before you bin them.
- Store hot ashes in a non-combustible container outside and away from anything that may burn. Allow to cool down for a number of days before you dispose of them.
- Repair or replace faulty electrical appliances immediately.
- Do a fire safety check before you go to bed.
- Close all doors at night.



The tragic truth about fire

- About 46 people die in fires in Ireland every year. Tragically, most of these deaths could be prevented if they had a working smoke or heat alarm fitted in the home.
- Smoke inhalation (breathing in smoke) – not heat or flames – causes most fire deaths. It can take as little as 3 minutes to die from smoke inhalation.
- Most fires happen at night when people are asleep. Smoke does not always wake people but can actually put them into a deeper sleep.
- Smoke and heat alarms do not 'put out' fires!
- 10-year smoke alarms are available (as ionization or optical alarms) and are fitted with a long-life lithium battery or a sealed power pack.

- A recent national survey on smoke alarm ownership found that over 300,000 households in Ireland do not have a smoke alarm.

See Appendix 1 for more information on fire prevention.

Final word

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. If you have any questions or suggestions about it, please talk to our Housing Maintenance Section. We want you to enjoy a safe and comfortable home.

Wexford County Council



Appendix 1

Your Home Fire Safety Checklist

Introduction

Nothing is more important than you and your family's safety. Using this helpful checklist will guide you on how to keep your home and family safe from fire. Read through the sections and if your answer is green, you're doing the right things. If it's **not green**, then you should take action to solve the problem. More information on where to look for advice is included at the bottom of the checklist.

Smoke alarms

1.	Do you have any smoke alarms fitted?	Yes	No
2.	Is there a smoke alarm fitted at each level in the house? (on the hall ceiling and landing ceilings upstairs)	Yes	No
3.	Do you have smoke alarms fitted in all or any of the following rooms?		
	Kitchen (A heat alarm may be more suitable)	Yes	No
	Sitting room/living room (A heat alarm may be more suitable)	Yes	No
	All bedrooms	Yes	No
	Attached garage or office or attic or other attached room	Yes	No
4.	Are all the smoke and or heat alarms interconnected ? Meaning, if one sounds, do they all sound?	Yes	No
5.	Do you test your smoke alarms once a week?	Yes	No
6.	How many rooms are in your house? Please include the attic as this may be the biggest room!		
7.	How many smoke/heat alarms are fitted?		

It is very good if the number of rooms matches the number of alarms.



Kitchen

1.	What type of cooking appliances do you use?		
	Do you use a deep fat fryer instead of a chip pan?	Yes	No
	Do you use a gas cooker or an electric hob ?	Yes	No
	Are these appliances clear of clutter and cleaned regularly	Yes	No
	When someone is cooking do they stay at the cooker or in the kitchen area?	Yes	N
2.	Are all electrical appliances that are not needed unplugged at night or when leaving your house ?	Yes	No
3.	Do you clean out your toaster regularly?	Yes	No
	Are there no rusted parts?		
4.	Have you checked your extractor hood filter and general condition recently?	Yes	No
5.	Can you switch off the gas or electricity supplies easily in the kitchen if a fire occurs without risking your own safety?	Yes	No
6.	Do you have a fire blanket and a fire extinguisher in your kitchen?	Yes	No
7.	Do you know how to use the fire blanket and extinguisher ?	Yes	No

Living room

1.	Is there an open fireplace in your house?	Yes	No
	Do you keep a spark guard in front of the fire after lighting it and when it is unattended?	Yes	No
	Are there mats or combustible items (for example, timber floor boards, paint thinner) near the fireplace?	Yes	No
	Is there a flat screen TV over the fire place or other electrical appliances near the fire? Electrical appliances may overheat easily if near a heat source!	Yes	No
	If you use an open fire , do you have your chimney cleaned twice a year?	Yes	No
	When you remove hot ashes , do you put them in a metal bucket and store them away from combustible items to cool down for 1 to 2 days?	Yes	No
2.	Is there a stove installed in the house?	Yes	No
	Is the flue installed into an existing chimney?	Yes	No
	Is the flue installed up through the house, through ceilings/floors or attics?	Yes	No
	Was the flue checked for any faults and cleaned recently?	Yes	No
3.	For heat producing devices in rooms, do you have a carbon monoxide detector?	Yes	No
4.	If candles are used, are they in a proper holder and never left unattended?	Yes	No



5.	Are all ashtrays emptied correctly, especially before going to bed?	Yes	No
6.	Are matches and lighters kept in a safe place away from children?	Yes	No
7.	Are all electrical appliances that are not needed unplugged?	Yes	No

Bedroom

1.	Do you use an electric blanket ?	Yes	No
	Is there any damage to the blanket ? Such as fraying fabric, scorch marks, exposed elements, creasing or folding, soiling, damp patches, tie tapes damaged or missing, worn flex or loose connections	Yes	No
	Does the blanket have thermostatic controls for safe all-night use?	Yes	No
	Do you switch the blanket off when going to sleep ?	Yes	No
2.	Do you unplug all unneeded electrical items?	Yes	No
3.	Do you leave devices such as laptops and phones charging and unattended?	Yes	No
4.	Is your floor area clear of toys and things in case you need to escape to safety?	Yes	No
5.	Are there dressing table mirrors facing the sunlight?	Yes	No
6.	Is there anything combustible near light bulbs of lamps ?	Yes	No

Hall

1.	Is there a clear path through the hallway if you need to make an escape?	Yes	No
2.	In an evacuation, can you and your family easily open the door ?	Yes	No
3.	If you need keys for the door , are they readily available?	Yes	No
4.	Do you have a working torch readily available?	Yes	No

Before going to sleep

1.	Does someone carryout a night-time routine safety check?	Yes	No
2.	Do you close all doors before going to bed?	Yes	No
3.	Does everyone in the family know the escape plan ?	Yes	No
4.	Does everyone in the family know where the keys are left at night ?	Yes	No
5.	Does everyone know where to meet outside the house in the event of fire?	Yes	No
6.	Do you leave on the washing machine/dryer when going to bed?	Yes	No



Outside and other actions

1.	Is your oil tank secure and not leaking?	Yes	No
2.	Could your oil tank catch fire ?	Yes	No
3.	Are the electrics at your property in good condition ?	Yes	No
4.	Are people allowed to carry out hot works (cutting or welding using gas) without your supervision ?	Yes	No
5.	Are all gas cylinders stored in a safe place away from combustibles?	Yes	No

Using the answers as a guide, please do everything you can to make your home safe.



Remember:

- Keeping your **family safe** is a **priority** for all.
- Get into the **habit of routine checks** when going to bed and when leaving your home.
- It is far **cheaper** to replace faulty equipment than it is to replace your home.

What should I do if there is a fire?

- get everyone to the planned safe place
- stay out
- dial 112/999, ask for the fire brigade
- stay on the line until the operator tells you to hang up

If you need **further advice**, please visit these helpful sites:

1. <http://firesafetyweek.ie/homes>
2. For fire safety leaflets and so on, go to www.housing.gov.ie and type in "fire safety" into search box.
3. www.electricireland.ie see electrical safety around the home.
4. Be aware of electrical **appliance recalls by manufacturers**. Check on the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission website under Product Safety at www.cccpc.ie
5. For **stove installation**, please refer to **Part J of the Building Regulations** and follow the guidance rules.
6. Contact information: Wexford County Fire Service Headquarters, Clonard Avenue, Wexford. Tel 053 19 6585; or Tel 053 19 6586 or email firedept@wexfordcoco.ie



Notes

PROOF



Notes

PROOF



Notes

PROOF



Wexford County Council

Home Maintenance

Handbook for Tenants



PROOF