

Private Landlords Newsletter

WELCOME to the sixth edition of the Private Landlords Newsletter for providing news and relevant information for landlords, letting and managing agents in Lancaster. We hope you find this informative and useful.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue (LFRS) issues safety guidance amid an alarming rise in e-bike and e-scooter fires



Lithium-ion batteries used to power new transport can cause ferocious and explosive fires if they are of poor quality or are mis-used.

E-bikes and e-scooters with lithium-ion batteries can catch fire quickly and with little warning. That's the message from Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS).

The danger occurs when e-bikes and e-scooters are left on charge unattended in homes or in communal areas such as hallways and stairwells, blocking emergency escape routes in multi-occupied buildings. The risks are particularly increased when they are charged indoors, especially overnight when occupants are asleep.

Advice from LFRS for tenants

- Always read the safety instructions that came with your device.
- Ensure you have working smoke alarms.
- Always use the charger that came with your device.
- If you need to buy a replacement battery or charger, always choose a branded, genuine product from the manufacturer. There are lots of fakes out there, and it can be difficult to spot the difference.
- Charge the device on a flat, solid, and stable surface.
- Never charge lithium batteries when you are sleeping, or if you are leaving the home.
- Never charge lithium batteries on your escape route. If possible, charge and store them away from your living areas.
- If the device has not been used for quite some time, be extra careful when you charge it – lithium batteries don't like being discharged to a very low voltage.
- Don't leave items continuously on charge after the charge cycle is complete – it's best not to leave your phone plugged in overnight for example.
- Never cover chargers or charging devices – that includes using your laptop power lead in bed.
- Protect batteries against being damaged – that's crushed, punctured, or immersed in water. Do not use if it looks physically damaged.
- Avoid storing, using, or charging batteries at very high or low temperatures.
- Buy e-scooters, e-bikes, chargers and batteries from reputable retailers.



- Many fires involve counterfeit electrical goods. Items which don't meet British or European standards pose a huge fire risk and while genuine chargers (or battery packs) may cost more, it's not worth putting your life at risk and potentially destroying your home by buying a fake charger.
- If buying an e-bike conversion kit, purchase from a reputable seller and check that it complies with British or European standards. Take particular care if buying from online auction or fulfilment platforms. Also be aware that if buying separate components, you should check that they are compatible.
- Register your product with the manufacturer to validate any warranties – batteries are usually included in warranties. Registering makes it easier for manufacturers to contact you in the event of safety or recall information.
- Check any products you have bought are not subject to a product recall. You can do this by checking [Electrical Safety First's website](#) or the [government website](#).
- E-bikes, e-scooters and their batteries should be stored in a cool place, avoiding excessively hot or cold areas.

Advice for Landlords

- Responsible Persons (RPs) should consider the risks associated with e-bikes and e-scooters regarding where they are being charged such as common areas, bike stores and mobility scooter charging rooms. Escape routes should be kept clear at all times and RPs may wish to advise residents on the safe use, storage and charging of these products.
- Ask tenants to notify you if they are purchasing/storing an electric scooter or bike so you can consider upgrading your insurance.
- Consider upgrading your tenancy agreement so these items should be kept outside and not in the common areas.
- Undertake regular property checks to check for these items.
- Check your insurance to check you are covered for house fires relating to these items.

Building Safety Act 2022 Section 156 amending the Fire Safety Order 2005

In conjunction with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service we would like to make you aware of some recent changes to legislation which may affect you as a responsible person. The Building Safety Bill received Royal Assent in April 2022 and became the Building Safety Act 2022. Section 156 of the new legislation has the effect of amending the Fire Safety Order 2005. These changes came into effect on the **1st October 2023** and will:

- Require that all Responsible Persons **must** record their completed fire risk assessment, and in full (where previously only specific information was required to be recorded);
- Require that all Responsible Persons **must** record the identity of the individual (their name), and/or if applicable, their organisation (name) engaged by them to undertake/review any or all of the fire risk assessment;
- Require that all Responsible Persons **must** record their fire safety arrangements (demonstrate how fire safety is managed in your premises);
- Require that all Responsible Persons **must** record (and as necessary update) their contact information, including a UK based address, and share this with other Responsible Persons and residents of multi-occupied residential premises where applicable;

- Require that all Responsible Persons **must** take reasonably practicable steps to ascertain the existence of other Responsible Persons who share or have duties in respect of the same premises, and of Accountable Persons (which are a new legal entity made under the Building Safety Act in the case of higher-risk residential buildings) in relation to the premises - they must then identify themselves to said persons;
- Require that departing RP's must share all 'relevant fire safety information' with incoming RP's;
- Responsible Persons of a building containing two or more sets of domestic premises **must** provide residents with relevant fire safety information in a format that is easily understood by the residents;
- Increase the level of fines for some Fire Safety Order 2005 offences;
- Strengthen the status of statutory guidance issued under Article 50 of the Fire Safety Order, you may have seen HM Government fire risk assessment guidance that is suitable for some smaller premises, which can be accessed using the links at the end of this document.

If you do appoint a fire risk assessor our recommendation is that you ensure they are competent to do so, in terms of having sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities. It remains the case that the Responsible Person has a duty to make sure that a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment is completed. (https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Grenfell/FSF_Guide_October_20.pdf)

Why is this happening?

Following the tragic Grenfell Tower Fire in 2017, an independent review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety was carried out by Dame Judith Hackitt DBE, called 'Building a Safer Future', which highlighted the need for fundamental reform to Building Safety and Fire Safety.

The Building Safety Act 2022 was introduced to address the issues identified in this independent review. Recently we have seen the introduction of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 which applies to residential premises with two or more domestic premises with common areas. Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022 strengthens this and takes reform beyond just residential premises. This is to ensure that every premises where the Fire Safety Order 2005 applies, engages in fire safety matters and in managing and reducing risk to relevant persons so that premises are safer from fire. Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service will endeavour to work with you in the introduction of these changes and provide advice where appropriate as a regulator.