



Fire & Building Safety Policy

Accent Housing: Fire & Building Safety Policy 280624 v1.0

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Fire & Building Safety



Document Owner: Alex Liburd – Director of Assets & Compliance

Author: Adam Vanden – Head of Customer Safety & Planned Maintenance

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Purpose: Accent Housing Limited (“Accent”), is a housing association that works to improve people’s lives. We exist to provide individuals and their communities with the service and support they need to aspire to better living. In doing so, we ensure that the decisions we make constitute excellent customer service, impeccable service standards, and represent value for money.

This policy aims to ensure that we meet our obligations as a responsible landlord and employer and to provide assurance that statutory requirements and best practice is adequately managed in relation to Fire and Building Safety.

This policy applies to all properties owned, leased or managed by Accent, and all work undertaken in these properties on Accent’s behalf.

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1. Introduction and Objectives

Accent has a duty of care and legal responsibility to our customers, colleagues, and visitors to ensure that fire and building safety risks are adequately managed for all buildings under our ownership and / or management.

This policy details how Accent proactively manage both building and fire safety to all our properties in line with the duties set out in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Fire Safety Act 2021, The Fire Safety Regulations 2022, The Building Safety Act 2022, the Higher Risk Buildings (England) Regulations 2023 and all relevant and applicable regulations. Further details on relevant regulations are set out in sections 3 and 4 of this policy.

The objective the Fire & Building Safety Policy supported by all supporting policies, procedures and strategies is to:

- Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, regulations, standards, and best practice.
- Effectively manage risks identified to ensure robust action plans are in place to reduce risks as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Develop supporting policies, procedures, and strategies to assist in mitigating risks associated with building and fire safety.
- Provide clear lines of responsibility across Accent in relation to the management of fire and building safety.
- Ensure adequate records and quality monitoring systems are implemented.
- Establish and agree fire and building safety management key performance indicators (KPIs) with the Board and Executive team.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all buildings owned or managed by Accent including all tenures including general needs, leasehold, shared ownership, social, affordable, and market rent and specialist housing.

Building safety is limited to high-rise buildings as defined by the Buildings Safety Act 2022 which currently defines high-rise buildings as those 18m+ in height or 7 stories and above and which contain at least 2 residential dwellings.

Based on the current definition, Accent currently have 2 blocks that fall within the scope of the Building Safety Act 2022:

Scheme	Stories	Height (m)
Alexander House, 1-52 Station Road, Aldershot, GU11 1BG	9	28.1
Stafford House, Station Road, Aldershot, GU11 1BA	6	18.5

In addition to the above buildings, Accent also manage a further block on behalf of Runnymede Council where we are defined as the 'Accountable Person'.

Scheme	Stories	Height (m)
Block C, Corn Merchant House, Station Road, Egham, TW20 9FE	5	21.2

Introduction of the Fire Safety Regulations 2022 also placed additional duties on all buildings over 11m with two or more domestic dwellings, Accent currently has 3 buildings within this scope:

Scheme	Stories	Height (m)
Whitley Court, 17 Grosvenor Road, Aldershot, GU11 1DL	5	16.0
Holmfield Court, 102-106 Thronton Road, Bradford, BD1 2DW	4	13.8
Block A, Corn Merchant House, Station Road, Egham, TW20 9FE	4	18.8

3. Obligations

Accent have a legal duty to ensure the safety of our customers, colleagues and visitors under various legislation. The key legislation and our obligations in relation to fire and building safety are detailed below:

Legislation	Obligations
Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO)	The FSO places duties to ensure that common areas of residential buildings, workplaces and commercial buildings meet the required standards. Duties include: • Ensuing adequate fire risk assessments (FRA) are completed. • Ensure that actions and recommendations from Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) are completed in a timely manner. • Ensure that there are adequate fire safety precautions in place to minimize the spread of fire. • Ensuring fire doors are not compromised. • Fire safety equipment, such as fire alarms, smoke ventilation and sprinklers are maintained and in good working order.
Fire Safety Act 2021(FSA)	The FSA clarified that the FSO applies to buildings with two or more domestic dwellings, more specifically that the FSO applies to: • The structure and external walls, including cladding, balconies, windows, and doors. • All doors within an in-scope building including common area doors and flat entrance doors when opening into a common area.

Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 (FSR)	The FSR place additional duties in relation to buildings containing two or more domestic dwellings, these include: • Residents where there are two or more domestic dwellings are to be provided with fire safety instructions relevant to their building and information on fire doors. • Buildings over 11m in height - undertake quarterly checks to communal fire doors and annual checks to flat entrance doors which open on to a common area. For buildings over 18m in height or at least 7 stories: • Provide and maintain Premise Information Boxes which are accessible by the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). • Provide the local FRS with building plans and other relevant information. • Installation of wayfinding signage. • Undertake monthly checks to lifts intended for use by the FRS. • Report any defects to lifts that are used by firefighters or as evacuation lifts to the local FRS where defects cannot be rectified within 24hrs.
Building Safety Act 2022 (BSA)	The BSA places additional duties on property managers / owners in relation to High-rise or Higher-risk buildings which are currently defined by the Act as buildings over 18m high, or which are 7 stories and above, and covers both the spread of fire and the structural integrity of buildings within scope. The BSA also introduces a new regulator, the Regulator of Building Safety. Duties falling within the Act include: • A named Principle Accountable Person for each higher risk building and Responsible Person where Accent are not the freeholder but have an interest in the building (these can be a named individual or a legal entity). • Produce and maintain building safety cases for each higher risk building. • Conduct and record regular building safety assessments. • Maintain and evidence the structural integrity of the building. • Produce a building safety customer engagement strategy. • Produce mandatory occurrence reporting.

	• When invited by the regulator, apply for a building assurance certificate.
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4. References

Accent are committed to ensuring our customer's homes and the buildings they live in, remain safe and fit for purpose. In achieving this, we will comply with all relevant legislation and regulations.

The following list sets out the main statutory, non-statutory and legislative compliance requirements for the overarching Fire & Building Safety Policy:

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 England and Wales (RRO)
- The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
- Building Safety Act 2022
- The Fire Safety Act 2021
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (s.11)
- The Housing Act 2004
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Planning & Building Regulations
- Environmental Protection Act
- The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (GSIUR) as amended by the Gas Safety (Installation and use) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- Gas Safety (Management) Regulations 1996
- The Electricity at Work Regulations (Act) 1992
- BS7671: The Wiring Regulations – 18th Edition
- BS EN/IEC 62305: Protection against lightning
- HSG107 – Maintenance of Portable Electrical Equipment
- Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)

Associated documents

- Customer Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Management Procedure
- Gas Safety Procedure
- Electrical Procedure
- Asbestos Management Plan
- Lifting Equipment Procedure
- Water Safety Procedure
- Contract Management Policy & Procedure

- Guaranteed Access Policy & Procedures
- Colleague Health & Safety Policy
- Accident and Incident Procedure

5. Requirements

To ensure Accent fulfills its statutory and non-statutory legal obligations and to ensure our customers are safe within their homes and buildings, the following ways of working have been implemented to enable the successful delivery of the Fire & Building Safety Policy:

Customer & Building Safety Team

Fire safety is incorporated within the Customer Safety Team where individual specialised customer safety Project Managers (fire, gas, mechanical & electrical, water hygiene and asbestos) are supported by a centralised admin team and managed centrally by a Customer Safety and Fire Safety Manager. The Fire Safety team is further supported by experienced Fire and Safety Assessors, who operate within a region but are managed centrally by a Fire Safety Manager. They are responsible for ensuring our customers are safe within their homes and buildings they live in, working closely with the Customer Safety Team.

They focus on regional delivery (with some national contracts), working with regional teams to contract manage and deliver against core Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and servicing and remediation requirements.

The Customer Safety team is managed by a Head of Customer Safety and Planned Maintenance working alongside the Head of Health, Safety and Facilities, to ultimately ensure we keep our colleagues and customers safe.

Working closely with the Customer Safety Team, the Building Information Manager is responsible for Building Safety within Accent. This includes leading on building safety cases, customer engagement and overall compliance with the Building Safety Act and regulator.

Colleagues

We work collaboratively across the business with colleagues to ensure our customers are kept safe within their homes and buildings. Regional teams utilise their localised knowledge and expertise to ensure we gain access to undertake servicing and remedial actions, particularly where access is challenging, in line with our policies and procedures.

Customers

We will ensure effective communication with our customers so that they are aware of their responsibilities towards customer and building safety, including the need to grant access when required and to report repairs. To achieve and maintain compliance we will also implement robust procedures to gain access where customers are not engaging.

Customers have a voice, and we will listen at every opportunity to ensure participation in the making of decisions that affect customer & building safety.

6. Fire Safety

Fire safety is incorporated within the Customer Safety Team where individual specialised customer safety Project Managers (fire, gas, mechanical & electrical, water hygiene and asbestos) are supported by a centralised admin team and managed centrally by a Customer Safety and Fire Safety Manager. The Fire Safety team is further supported by experienced Fire and Safety Assessors, who operate within a region but are managed centrally by a Fire Safety Manager. They are responsible for ensuring our customers are safe within their homes and buildings they live in, working closely with the Customer Safety Team.

The Responsible Person in relation to Fire Safety is: **Accent Housing Ltd.**

To ensure Accent fulfills its statutory and non-statutory legal obligations and to ensure our customers are safe within their homes and buildings, Accent will take the following steps in relation to Fire Safety:

Fire Risk Assessments

Accent will, as a minimum, conduct a type 1 Fire Risk Assessment to all buildings owned, managed or under its control and that fall within the scope of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Where it is deemed a further level of inspection is required, type 2, 3 or 4 fire risk assessments may be undertaken.

Fire risk assessments will be undertaken by suitably competent and experienced persons and will be in accordance with PAS 79-2.

During the course of the fire risk assessment, the assessor will take all reasonable steps to access 10% of domestic dwellings within the building.

The frequency of each fire risk assessment will be determined by the competent person undertaking the assessment, however as a minimum will be conducted in accordance with the below:

Higher-risk buildings and buildings over 11m in height or five stories and above.	Annually
Supported Housing, Independent Living Schemes and Houses of Multiple Occupation	Annually
Three and four Storey general needs buildings.	2 Yearly
Offices	2 Yearly
General needs blocks of less than three stories.	3 Yearly

Actions will be prioritised into 3 categories as follows:

Prioritisation	Timescale
High	1 Month
Medium	3 Months
Low	6 Months

Actions relating to fire risk assessments will be stored and monitored through ActiveH and reported to key stakeholders monthly.

Evacuation Policies

Accent adopts 2 types of evacuation policies dependent on the building type, occupants and use.

i. Stay Put Policy

Typically used in general needs purpose-built blocks or where compartmentation has been proven to be affected by other means such as survey and inspection.

A stay put policy requires customers and visitors to remain in their home, if safe to do so, unless otherwise instructed to do so by the emergency services.

ii. Full Evacuation Policy

Typically used where buildings have been converted and adequate levels of protection, such as compartmentation to resist the spread of fire, cannot or have not been confirmed. Offices and other commercial premises will also apply a full evacuation strategy.

A full evacuation policy requires all customers, visitors, and colleagues to evacuate the building on the sounding of the fire alarm.

Accent will ensure that the evacuation policy adopted to each building is displayed in the common areas of each block, Evacuation policies are also published on Accents website for all blocks.

Fire Detection – Communal Systems

Where required, communal fire detection will be installed and maintained in line with British Standards and manufacturers recommendations.

Where Accent has adopted a 'stay put' policy, sounding alarms can often cause confusion. It is therefore our policy that communal fire detection, and in particular audible fire detection, will not be fitted in blocks where a stay put policy is in place.

Fire Detection – Domestic Dwellings

Accent will, as a minimum, provide all domestic dwellings under our ownership or management with hard wired detection to a minimum grade of LD3. Where a property becomes void or is subject to major electrical upgrades, systems will be upgraded to LD2.

Accent will make all reasonable endeavors to test all domestic detectors annually, and this is achieved alongside our gas servicing programme as well as a standalone cyclical programme for all remaining properties.

Firefighting Equipment and Fixed Installations

Accent will provide adequate portable firefighting equipment in line with the recommendations of the fire risk assessment and will ensure that suitable training is delivered in relation to the correct use and application of the equipment provided.

All fixed and portable equipment will be maintained in accordance with legislation and manufacturers recommendations.

Where fixed equipment, such as dry risers or firefighting lifts are unavailable for use by the local Fire and Rescue Service, they will be immediately informed, and the property information box updated.

Fire Doors

Flat entrance doors leading to a common area and communal fire doors will be inspected in line with the Fire Safety Regulations 2022 by competent persons.

Repairs and installation of fire doors will only be undertaken by suitably competent and certified persons and contractors.

Information relating to fire door safety will be published to all residents that live in a block of two or more domestic dwellings annually.

Emergency and Escape Lighting

Emergency and escape lighting will be installed in line with regulations and best practice where required by suitably competent and certified contractors.

Testing of emergency lighting, including a monthly drop test and annual 3-hour discharge test, will be completed by suitably competent persons.

Maintenance and repairs to emergency lighting systems shall be undertaken by suitably competent persons.

Wayfinding, Signage and Notices

Wayfinding signage will be installed and maintained in accordance with Approved Document B as outlined in the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, in buildings with a height greater than 18 meters or 7 storeys.

Fire action signs will be installed and maintained in corridors (on every level), near entrance doors and common areas. Where fire safety signs are provided, they will be in accordance with BS 5499 and the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996.

i. Primary Authority Scheme (PAS)

Accent are members of the Primary Authority Scheme with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). The scheme allows a consistent approach across the local authorities that we operate, and although we continue to work extremely closely with all local Fire and Rescue Services, the PAS service is invaluable when implementing new policies and procedures, as and when legislation is introduced and updated.

7. Building Safety

Working closely with the Customer Safety Team, the Building Information Manager is responsible for Building Safety within Accent. This includes leading on the development of building safety cases, customer engagement and overall compliance with the Building Safety Act and regulator.

To ensure Accent fulfills its statutory and non-statutory legal obligations and to ensure our customers are safe within their homes and buildings, Accent will take the following steps in relation Building Safety:

Registration of Higher Risk Buildings

It is now a legal requirement that all higher risk buildings are registered with the Building Safety Regulator, where Accent are the Principal Accountable Person, all in scope buildings will be registered. Where Accent are an Accountable Person, we shall actively support the Principal Accountable Person with registering any building with the regulator.

Building Safety Case Reports

Building safety case reports will be developed and maintained for all high-rise buildings under Accents ownership and management that fall within the scope of the regulations, or where Accent are the Accountable Person for a building, we will ensure that the Principal Accountable Person has access to all relevant information where required to draft the Building Safety Case Report.

Mandatory Occurrence Reporting

Accent will produce a mandatory occurrence reporting procedure, to allow people to report building safety incidents and risks that have caused, or if not remedied are likely to cause:

- the death of a significant number of people
- serious injury to a significant number of people

Building safety incidents and risks involve at least one of the following:

- structural failure of the building
- the spread of fire or smoke in the building

Where a building is undergoing construction or major works, it is the responsibility of the Principal Designer and Principal Contractor to submit mandatory occurrences. At all other times, it is the responsibility of the Principal Accountable Person.

Building Safety Engagement Strategy

Accent will implement a Building Safety Engagement Strategy for all higher risk buildings in scope of the regulations. Each strategy will contain information of how customers of higher risk buildings can:

- Report concerns around fire and building safety
- Complain to us about fire or building safety issues and the escalation through to the Building Safety Regulator
- Access information relating to their block.

Additionally, the engagement strategy will also detail the ways in which we will engage with Customers and how we will ensure we consider their individual needs across our diverse customer base.

8. Contract Management

Contractors are carefully selected through a robust procurement process, to ensure they have the correct skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications and a similar ethos to Accent to ensure they deliver our customer safety requirements in line with each specific policy and procedure, managed by the Customer and Building Safety Teams.

Contractors will be selected, managed, and monitored in line with the Contract management Procedure.

9. Performance Monitoring

The effectiveness of the delivery and management of fire & building safety is monitored through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

KPI results are reported to the Senior Leadership Team and Board monthly as part of the Corporate Scorecard.

Fire and Building Safety is also reported quarterly at Accents Strategic Health and Safety Group, which is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer.

10. Quality Assurance

Undertaken both internally and externally, auditing provides independent assurance that ourselves and our contractors are delivering the standards expected to achieve compliance with all fire & building safety requirements. The results and findings are used to ensure we are continually striving to improve the service we deliver and the performance of our contractors.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the policy and its related policies and procedures.

The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for ensuring that the principles within this policy are communicated and understood by all within the directorate.

The Director of Assets & Compliance is accountable for the implementation and delivery of this policy and associated policies and procedures.

The Head of Customer Safety and Planned Maintenance and the Building Information Manager are responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy and for developing procedures that will deliver the policy principles.

The Customer Safety Manager and Fire Safety Manager are responsible for the day-to-day delivery and management of all compliance protocols relating to this policy, associated policies and procedures.

The Customer Safety Project Managers and Fire & Safety Assessors are responsible for the effective implementation of those policies, procedures and ensuring contractors perform to the required standards.

The Head of Health, Safety and Facilities will be responsible for advising key stakeholders on Accent's legal obligations and assist in the implementation and on-going review of this policy.

Accent colleagues have a duty to ensure they work in accordance with current Health and Safety legislation to ensure the continued safety of both customers and themselves.

Contractors to undertake all customer safety requirements, as set out within this policy in line with legislation and regulatory requirements.

12. Summary

This policy document acts to serve as a declaration of Accent's intent and commitment to uphold its statutory duty of care.