

Private Landlord's newsletter

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New electrical safety law

From 1 December 2015, private landlords in Scotland are required by law to ensure that their properties are electrically safe. This covers:

- the installations in the property for the supply of electricity
- electrical fixtures and fittings, and
- any appliances provided by the landlord under the tenancy

Landlords must be able to show that these are in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order.

So what do landlords need to do?

Landlords are required to ensure that regular electrical safety inspections are carried out by a competent person,* and that anything that fails to pass the inspection is replaced or repaired immediately. As a minimum, an electrical safety inspection must be carried out:

- before a tenancy starts, and
- during the tenancy, at intervals of no more than five years from the date of the previous inspection

A copy of the most recent electrical safety inspection

reports must be provided to both new and retained tenants.

*A competent person is defined as a person who holds current membership of an accredited registration scheme operated by a recognised professional body, such as the UKAS approved schemes operated by the NICEIC and SELECT (i.e. a registered electrician. Such electricians work to the UK national safety standard BS 7671 (otherwise known as the IEE Wiring Regulations).

What happens during the electrical safety inspection?

An electrical safety inspection has two parts:

- An **Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)** - formerly known as a Periodic Inspection Report (PIR) - on the safety of the electrical installations, fixtures and fittings. The electrician will carry out checks of installations for the supply of electricity, electrical fittings (e.g. switches, sockets and light fittings) and fixed electrical equipment (e.g. boilers, panel and storage heaters and hard wired smoke and fire detectors). They will produce an EICR document that highlights any problems using different classifications and any remedial work that is undertaken as a result of the inspection will then be recorded on a Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificate.

- A **Portable Appliance Test (PAT)** on any portable appliances that are provided by the landlord i.e. any movable electrical equipment that you have provided as part of the tenancy (TVs, refrigerators, toasters, etc.) and must be carried out by a competent person, either an electrician registered with one of the Government approved schemes, or a person (which can include the landlord) who has completed appropriate training as a PAT Tester.

When do landlords have to do this by?

For **NEW** tenancies starting on or after 1 December 2015 properties must comply and tenants be given copies of the EICR before the tenancy starts.

For **EXISTING** tenancies before 1 December 2015 tenants must be provided with an EICR by 1 December 2016, unless the tenancy ends before that date.

All landlords and letting agents are advised to read the guidance in full to familiarise themselves with the detail of the requirements. The full guidance can be found on the PRHP website:

<https://www.prhpscotland.gov.uk/repairs-application-and-guidance>

Flytipping

Flytipping is the illegal dumping of waste, which can be found anywhere, from local authority land to roadsides to private land. It is a serious environmental crime which blights some of Scotland's most beautiful attractions.

As a landlord or agent you must ensure your tenants are aware of their responsibilities for disposal of their waste. Details of bin collection days and recycling information is available on the West Dunbartonshire Council's website at:

<http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/>

The Council provides a special uplift service for large

household items, should this be required. The number for arranging a special uplift is **01389 738282** - there is a charge for this service.

In addition there are two Recycling Centres within the area - Dalmoak, Renton Road, Dumbarton and Ferry Road in Old Kilpatrick - that Tenants can use to dispose of waste items that don't fit into the wheeled bin. The Recycling Centre opening hours are noted below:

8.00am - 5.45pm
Monday to Sunday from October to March

8.00am - 7.45pm
Monday to Sunday from April to September

There is also a further 125 recycle points throughout the district for the collection of glass, excess blue bin recyclable material and, in some cases, clothes, textiles, shoes, books, CDs and DVDs.

Flytipping/dumping waste is illegal and therefore anyone caught is committing a serious offence and may be fined up to £40,000.

As a landlord or agent you must ensure that your tenants are disposing of their waste appropriately and should you require to remove any waste that tenants may leave behind you must do so following current good practice, using a reputable company who are appropriately registered for removing waste.

You may be required to provide disposal details if requested. Details of current registered waste carriers are available from SEPA and can be found on the following link:

<http://apps.sepa.org.uk/rocas/>

**If you see anyone fly-tipping/dumping rubbish illegally call:
Dumb Dumpers Stop Line: 0845 2 30 40 90**

Smoke alarms in private lets

The Scottish Government has produced revised statutory guidance on the requirements for smoke alarms. A copy of the revised statutory guidance is available on the PRHP website by visiting:

<https://www.prhpscotland.gov.uk/repairs-application-and-guidance>

However, the main points relative to smoke detectors are as follows. The revised Domestic Technical Handbook guidance states there should be at least:

- one functioning smoke alarm in the room which is frequently used by the occupants for general daytime living purposes
- one functioning smoke alarm in every circulation space, such as hallways and landings
- one heat alarm in every kitchen
- all alarms should be interlinked

The number and position of the alarms will depend on the size and layout of the house. There should be at least one alarm on each floor. The landlord should either install smoke alarms and a heat alarm that meets the standard set by building regulations or be able to justify why a lesser level of protection is appropriate in a particular house. If there is a requirement for a particular house to meet more stringent standards, then these more stringent standards apply.

An alarm should be installed in accordance with the recommendations contained in BS5839 Part 6 and the landlord should ensure the alarm is regularly maintained in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. Please note with regard to the installation of hardwired smoke alarms in flats, a Building Warrant requires to be obtained before commencing this work. For further information on how to obtain this please contact Building Standards on **0141 951 7941**.

Private landlord forum

West Dunbartonshire Council is pleased to announce that the next Landlord Forum will take place at St Peter the Apostle High School, Kirkoswald Drive, Clydebank, G81 2DB, on Thursday 28 January 2016 at 6pm.

Private landlords and letting agents attending will benefit from presentations offered by Landlord Accreditation Scotland and Home Energy Scotland. There will also be an Empty Homes update and an informative session on the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill.

To reserve your place, or for more information please contact the Housing Strategy Team on **01389 737721** or by email on the following link: <http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/private-housing/private-landlord-forum/>

If you need directions, or any other assistance to enable you to participate in this event please contact us and we will be happy to help.

Carbon Monoxide - The Silent Killer

Landlords are reminded that a Carbon Monoxide Detector will be a mandatory requirement from 1 December 2015.

You can't see it, taste it or smell it but Carbon Monoxide (CO) can kill quickly and with no warning. The Repairing Standard has also been amended to ensure that a private let property has satisfactory provision for giving warning if carbon monoxide is present in a concentration that is hazardous to health.

CO detectors should be powered by a battery designed to operate for the working life of the detector which is usually between five and seven years. The detector should incorporate a warning device to alert the users when its working life is due to expire and should be replaced on or before the expiry date. Hard wired mains operated CO detectors with fixed wiring (not plug in types) may be used as an alternative, provided they are fitted with a sensor failure warning device. CO detectors must comply with BS EN 50291-1+A1:2002 and, where hard-wired or wireless installations are adopted, applicable European directives.

Private landlords may install combined Fire/CO detectors providing they meet the appropriate requirements of BS EN 50291-1:2010+A1:2012 with regard to CO detection/alarm activation. It will however be a requirement that the detectors be hard wired to ensure compliance with the guidance on satisfactory provision for detecting and warning of fires. As outlined above single CO detectors can be battery powered.

The full guidance is available on the following link:

<https://www.prhpscotland.gov.uk/repairs-application-and-guidance>

Homes again - West Dunbartonshire

West Dunbartonshire is offering help to owners of long term empty properties.

The average empty homes owner in Scotland is losing an estimated £7310 per year in lost rent, Council Tax payments, insurance, and security costs.

The Council's Empty Homes Officer is here to help and offers help in a range of ways from information and advice to discounts and funding options. Whether your property has been empty 6 months or for many years the Empty Homes Officer may be able to help you.

Information and assistance can be provided on: **Selling, renting, renovation, deciding where to start, the Council's Empty Homes Loan Fund and many more**

Support for Private Sector Landlords

If you want to improve the energy efficiency of your rental property or are considering installing a renewable system, there is support available to landlords in Scotland.

Call Home Energy Scotland on **0808 808 2282** for free, impartial and tailored advice on the energy saving measures and financial support available for your property.

Home Energy Scotland

Home Energy Scotland from the Scottish Government offers free, impartial advice on saving energy, saving money and keeping your property warmer during the colder months. This service offers personalised support to anyone living in Scotland who finds it hard to heat their home. A range of support is offered from money-saving advice to free insulation. Some offers depend on where your property is in Scotland. Private landlords should encourage their tenants to call Home Energy Scotland on **0808 808 2282** to find out what offers they are eligible for. If the tenant qualifies for discounted or even free insulation and heating measures, this may make the property more energy efficient, increase its value and lead to a lower turnover of tenancies. To find out more, landlords can visit homeenergyscotland.org.uk to see what Home Energy Scotland offers and pass on the good news to their tenants to help them create a warmer home and save money.

Free Property Assessments

Private sector landlords can get free, impartial advice from a specialist advisor on how to improve the energy efficiency of their tenanted properties. A specialist can visit the property to assess what can be done. A tailored report will then be produced with recommendations, along with the cost of implementation of improvements, possible funding support and potential financial and carbon savings. The specialist will take you through your options. An assessment of which renewables systems may be suitable can also be undertaken at the same time if you are interested in technologies such as solar PV, heat pumps, and wind turbines.

Improving the energy efficiency of your properties could help you benefit from:

- Higher EPC ratings which could make properties easier to let
- More satisfied tenants which may lead to lower turnover of tenancies
- Lower energy bills for tenants which could lead to reduced rent arrears and defaults
- Meeting energy and heating energy efficiency standards set for the landlord accreditation scheme
- Reduced incidence of condensation and dampness
- Reduced carbon dioxide emissions from properties

