

Gas safety

The problem

Every year about 30 people die from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues, which have not been properly installed or maintained. Many others also suffer ill health. When gas does not burn properly, as with other fuels such as coal, wood or oil, excess carbon monoxide is produced, which is poisonous.

You can't see it. You can't taste it. You can't even smell it. But carbon monoxide can kill without warning in just a matter of minutes.

You are particularly at risk when you are asleep because you cannot recognise the early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. These include tiredness, drowsiness, headache, nausea, pains in the chest and stomach pains. These symptoms can mimic many common ailments and may easily be confused with flu or simple tiredness.

If you or your family experience the above symptoms, and you believe carbon monoxide may be involved, **you must seek urgent medical advice**. Your doctor will need to test a blood or breath sample. Carbon monoxide quickly leaves the blood and tests may be inaccurate if taken more than four hours after exposure has ended.

You are at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if:

- Your appliance was poorly installed
- Your appliance is not working properly
- Your appliance has not been checked for safety or maintained regularly
- There is not enough fresh air in the room
- Your chimney or flue gets blocked up
- You allow non-CORGI registered engineers to install or maintain your appliance(s)

A safe gas appliance

There is a particular risk if you sleep in a room where an appliance, which is not of the room-sealed type (e.g. a conventional gas fire) is left burning at night.

Flue outlets for room-sealed appliances are commonly located on an external wall at a low level protected by a cage rather than at or above roof level).

The answers

NEVER use a gas appliance if you think it is not working properly. Signs to look for include yellow or orange flames (except fuel-effect fires which display this colour flame), soot or stains around the appliance and pilot lights, which frequently blow out.

NEVER cover an appliance or block the conventional air vents.

NEVER block or obstruct any fixed ventilation grilles or air bricks.

CAUTION: Whenever draught exclusion, ceiling or extraction fans, double glazing or conservatory extensions are fitted to a room containing a gas appliance, the appliance should subsequently be checked for safety.

ALL gas consumers must have appliances checked for safety and serviced at least every 12 months by a CORGI-registered service engineer.

CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS are a useful back-up precaution but must **NOT** be regarded as a substitute for proper installation and maintenance of gas equipment by a CORGI-registered installer. If you decide to buy a carbon monoxide alarm, ensure it meets current safety standards (BS 7860 or BS EN 50291) and carries the Kitemark. If in doubt ask a member of staff for advice. Always follow the manufacturer's siting instructions.

Gas leaks

If you smell gas, or suspect there is a gas escape, you should immediately do the following:

- Shut off the gas supply at the meter or emergency control valve (if you know where it is). If gas continues to escape call **Wales and West Utilities** on the **Gas Emergency Freephone Number 0800 111 999**.

- Extinguish all sources of ignition (such as naked flames, cigarettes)
- Do not operate any electrical switches (**on or off**)
- Ventilate the building by opening doors and windows
- Ensure access to the property is made available
- In the case of suspected carbon monoxide leakage, follow the above procedure, except if you are able to identify the specific appliance at fault. In this case you should consult a CORGI-registered installer to investigate and make repairs.

The Law

The Gas Safety (installation and use) Regulations 1998 place duties on gas consumers, installers, suppliers and landlords. These regulations link with other safety controls on combustion equipment, e.g. the Building Regulations, which are standards for ventilation and flues. For your own protection remember:

- **By law anyone carrying out work on gas appliances or fittings as part of their business must be competent and registered with CORGI (the Council for Registered Gas Installers).** Always check your installer is registered by asking to see their current CORGI photo ID card which has a photo of the installer, their CORGI registration number, their trading title and expiry date of the card. The reverse of the card details what kind of gas work the installer is able to do. You can also call CORGI during normal office hours on 08704 012300 or log on to the CORGI website on www.corgi-gas-safety.com. Gas Service engineers working on behalf of the Council will also have an ID card confirming who they work for.
- **By law only a competent person can carry out work on gas appliances or fittings.** Do-it-yourself work on gas appliances or fittings could be dangerous and is likely to be illegal.
- **By law you must not use any gas appliance or fittings you know or suspect to be unsafe.** Through CORGI, HSE (Health and Safety Executive) has asked all registered installers to disconnect any gas appliance or fittings, which are so dangerous as to be threat to life if

they are used. If your installer asks your permission to disconnect such an appliance or fitting it will be in the interests of your own safety, and that of others, to agree. Before you use this appliance or fitting again, have it repaired by a CORGI-registered installer.

- **By law, landlords are generally responsible for making sure that gas fittings and flues are maintained in good order, and gas appliances and flues are checked for safety once in a period of 12 months. They must also keep a record of the safety checks for at least two years and issue the latest certificate to existing tenants and any new tenants before they move in.** If you own the appliance, you are responsible for its maintenance and safety checks. However, if you are a Council tenant, we will service these appliances, but you must let us know that you have installed them.
- **By law, with the exception of the room-sealed type, there are restrictions on the installation of gas appliances such as fires, boilers and heaters in sleeping accommodation. These restrictions apply only to appliances fitted after 1 January 1996, and to those already installed in rooms in rented accommodation which have been converted to bedrooms after 31 October 1998.** Appliances, which are not room-sealed, e.g. conventional gas fires of 14 kilowatts or less, may only be fitted if they have a device which automatically turns the gas supply off before a dangerous level of fumes can build up. However, for appliances above 14 kilowatts, only those of a room-sealed type are allowed in such accommodation.
- **By law, since 31 October 1998, it has been illegal to install in any room instantaneous water heaters which are not room-sealed or fitted with a safety device which automatically turns the gas supply off before a dangerous level of poisonous fumes builds up.**
- **By law, mains gas transporters / emergency service providers (ESPs) must, in the event of an emergency, make the situation safe.** They should establish the cause of a gas escape within 2 hours. In the case of actual or suspected escapes of carbon monoxide they should respond to reports from consumers and make the situation safe.

Getting your gas appliances serviced

If you have gas appliances in your property, we will contact you every year, to let you know that they are due for servicing and advise you of an appointment date. That appointment will either be a morning or afternoon appointment. If the appointment time is inconvenient, you should arrange another appointment, using the telephone number provided in the appointment letter.

Morning appointments are between 8am and 1pm.

Afternoon appointments are between 1pm and 5pm.

There is a charge for this service - it is included in your rent.

If you have arranged for gas appliances to be installed yourself, you must let us know, so that we have an accurate record of what appliances are in our properties. We will also service these appliances.

You will be sent a customer satisfaction form which we would ask you to complete and return (a postage-paid envelope will be included) after the servicing has been carried out. We value your comments, and the information you provide will be used to assist in improving the service.

It is your responsibility to provide access to the property to allow for the servicing of gas appliances.

If you miss an appointment to have appliances serviced, it is very important that you contact us to re-arrange a suitable time by –

- Telephone 01752 304692
- Email gasservicing@plymouth.gov.uk
- Writing to The Gas Servicing Team
 Housing Services
 Plymouth City Council
 Prince Rock Depot
 Macadam Road
 Plymouth
 PL4 0RZ

We will continue to try and gain access to your property until appliances have been serviced, so please do not ignore our letters.

If you continue to refuse us access, we will take legal action to obtain access to your home, this may result in your eviction for failing to comply with your tenancy agreement. If Plymouth City Council takes legal action you will be liable to pay legal and administration costs. We will give you warning if we are going to do this.

Plymouth City Council

Civic Centre

Plymouth

PL1 2AA

Tel: 01752 668000

www.plymouth.gov.uk

Repairs Freephone 08082 306500

Gas Servicing 01752 304692

Area Offices

Devonport Office

Granby Way

Devonport

Plymouth

PL1 4AB

Tel: 01752 304323

North Prospect Office

91/93 North Prospect Rd

North Prospect

Plymouth

PL2 2NA

Tel: 01752 306436

Estover Office

Leypark Walk

Estover

Plymouth

PL6 8UE

Tel: 01752 306548

Whitleigh Office

101 Whitleigh Green

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PL5 4DE

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