

You're all familiar with bikes in hallways, smoke alarms with no batteries and burnt food, which can characterise the typical student habitat.



The pictures left and below show the devastation caused following a fire in student accommodation in Exeter, in July 2006. In this incident almost all of the ground floor was damaged by one of the most severe fires that the crew had seen. As you can see the plaster has burnt from the walls and little remains of anything.

Fortunately the property was unoccupied at the time –

everyone was out at the end of year party.

Imagine then that this fire started in your house. Would you know what to do? Would your housemates be able to squeeze past those bikes and other items in the hall? What if they were drunk or sound asleep? Have you planned an escape route? Do you have smoke alarms fitted?



Working smoke alarms should be fitted in all dwellings, Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service offer a FREE home safety visit, carried out by fire-fighters who will come to your home and conduct a fire safety

assessment. The fire-fighters will advise you on what safety equipment you should have in your accommodation and will give advice and guidance on avoiding fires.

Smoke alarms cost as little as £5 and you can get them from supermarkets and in high-street stores. If you are buying a smoke alarm, consider getting a 10 year alarm, which may cost a few pounds more but will not require frequent battery changes.

To request a Home Safety Visit call free on: 0800 73 11 822. For other fire safety advice, contact the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Helpline on: 01392 872288 or text information line: 078 0000 2476.

“OK, so surely all that sort of thing is my landlord’s responsibility”. The following paragraphs detail in general what your landlord is responsible for. But remember not all properties are covered by the same legislation.

Your council’s Environmental Health Officer will be able to give you more details about your landlord’s obligations and can force your landlord to provide adequate fire precautions.

What are your landlord’s obligations?

The 2004 Housing Act requires the landlord to do several things about fire safety:

- There has to be an adequate means of escape
- The property will have to be fitted with fire alarms and, depending on size, may have fire fighting extinguishing equipment and escape lighting

If the property is an HMO subject to licensing (3 storeys and above and 5 or more people not living as a single household), your landlord must also comply with license conditions in relation to fire safety.

By law, your landlord must:

- Make sure that all the gas appliances they provide are maintained in good order and that a Corgi-registered plumber carries out a safety check each year
- Maintain all electrical installations (fixed wiring and so on) and any electrical appliances they provide (cookers, kettles and so on) and make sure they are safe to use
- Make sure any furniture and furnishings they provide meet the fire resistance regulations.

For further information on your landlord’s responsibilities and general fire safety, please visit

<http://www.firekills.gov.uk/leaflets/pdf/english/firesafetyforpeopleinsharedaccommodation.pdf>

