

Fire Safety

and your legal duties



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The Law

There are three main pieces of legislation which apply to fire safety in residential buildings, these are:

- **The Building Regulations 2000** (also known as building control regulations) – which requires all home owners to comply with building control requirements, when undertaking any alterations to their property.
- **The Regulatory (Reform Fire) Safety Order 2005** – which requires lessee's to cooperate with the Landlord or their appointed agent to ensure the risk from fire is reduced as far as possible.
- **The Housing Act 2004** – which requires lessees to reduce the risk from fire within the home (particularly relevant where a property is sublet)

Fire doors

Fire doors create a barrier from fire and toxic smoke. They prevent them from travelling around a building during a fire. This keeps the damage to a small area, allowing for evacuation, stay put and safe access for the emergency services.

In a block of flats you will find fire and smoke doors on the stairwells, the corridors and on the flat front doors. You will also see them protecting areas where there's a risk of combustion, such as bin storage or mains electricity service cupboard.

Sometimes you will find fire doors inside flats, but this depends on the specific design and layout of the individual flat.

So how will this affect me?

Apartment entrance doors

Apartment entrance doors that form part of a fire compartment in a building are required to be fire doors and are one of the most important features of a building's fire precautions and have two key functions:

- To stop a fire inside an apartment, spreading to the communal parts and preventing residents from escaping via the corridor or staircase.
- To stop a fire in the communal areas of a block of apartments, spreading into an apartment, where residents may be sheltering until the fire service arrives.

I want to change my apartment entrance door

Replacement of apartment entrance doors are categorised as controlled work under the Building Regulations 2000. This means that anyone who wishes to change their apartment entrance door (or any other door between their apartment and a communal area i.e. a secondary means of escape door), will need to obtain permission from the building control department on the local council in addition to seeking landlords' consent and ensuring the new door meets current standards.

I inherited my door when I purchased the property from a previous leaseholder, do I need to do anything?

Yes. Over time legal requirements and fire safety standards have changed, as such a door installed when the building was constructed or prior to 2000 may now not meet the necessary standard, so you may need to upgrade some elements or replace your door to ensure the apartment door meets current standards.

How can I check if my door meets the current standards?

If you inherited your door from a previous owner, check with your solicitor who should have confirmed if any alterations had been undertaken to the property and attained copies of any building control consents attained for alterations undertaken, this should include information regarding any replacement of the apartment door.

If you have changed your door, either the supplier or builder who installed your door should be able to confirm if the door installed was a fire door set and provide you with a certificate confirming this.

If you cannot find any information about your apartment door, listed below are some simple checks you can undertake to confirm if this is a fire door:

- 1 Tap / knock your door, does it sound hollow?
Look inside your letterbox, does the door look like it's made of solid wood? Fire doors will be of solid timber construction.
- 2 Measure the width of the door (the thin edge).
Fire doors must be a minimum of 44mm (4.4cm) in thickness. If your door has panelled sections and the thickness of these timber panels is less than 44mm in thicknesses (i.e. they are thinner than the surrounding parts of the door) it is unlikely that your door is a fire door.
- 3 Check if there are three hinges fitted and that these all bear the CE mark.
- 4 Look for a coloured plug in the door itself or any label or markings, which may indicate the door has been certified by either TRADA's Q-Mark Scheme or BWF's Certifire scheme.
- 5 If your door has a glazed panel(s) within it, the glass should either be Georgian wired or have a special fire-resistant glazing fitted (this will be indicated by an etched mark 'BS476:22'). If the glazing does not have either, it's unlikely that the door is a fire door.
- 6 Is there a 25mm door stop fitted around the door frame which the door closes too? Or is an intumescent or smoke seal (or a combination) fitted?

(Please see the picture of a smoke seal)
- 7 Is the door self-closing? i.e. when you let it go, it will shut itself. Fire doors are required to be fitted with either an overhead door closer or a jambcloser.
- 8 UPVC doors are not currently accepted as fire doors.



If your door meets all the above criteria it is likely that it meets the standard and will perform effectively in a fire. However, if you are still unsure after carrying out the above, we would suggest that you take your own independent advice from a specialised contractor.

Can I upgrade my current door rather than replace it to meet the standard?

This will depend on the construction of the door, if a door isn't of solid construction; of the correct thickness or fitted with the correct glazing, it won't be possible to upgrade it. In some cases, the door itself may be adequate and only minor improvements such as changing ironmongery or fitting a self-closing device may be required. Please contact your managing agent if you are unsure and would like further assistance and advice or would like to have your door assessed.

Where upgrading of an existing door is undertaken, a valid fire test report or assessment report by a suitably qualified person must be provided by the lessee on completion of works. Where this is not provided, building control and the Landlord will not be able to accept the door and may require that it is replaced with a new door set.

I want to replace my front door what standard do I need to achieve?

All new fire door sets to apartments are to be to FD30s standard in accordance with BS476: Part 22 1987 or BS EN 1634-1 2000. We also recommend new apartment doors meet "security by design" standards.

A test certificate for all replacement doors should be provided to the homeowner by the contractor supplying/ fitting the door confirming that the door set meets this standard. Alternatively, fire door sets should be marked in accordance with TRADA's Q-Mark Scheme or BWF's Certificate Scheme.

How can I find a competent builder to install a new door for me?

Installing a fire door correctly is as important as ensuring the door itself is to the correct standard, we recommend that homeowners only utilise the services of a competent third-party accredited fire door installation company. There are various third-party accredited schemes, which allow you to view their registers and locate a suitably qualified trades person;

BRE Group – LPCB scheme, LPS 1271 installation of fire and security door sets

<http://www.redbooklive.com/search/search.jsp?id=163&searchgroupid=53&searchgroupypeid=7>

BM Trada Q Mark: OP37 Fire door installation scheme

<http://www.bmtrada.co.uk/personnelcertification/bm-trada-q-mark-personnel-schemes/Q-Mark+Fire+Door+Installation>