

Fact Card 14 – Fire Doors in Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO)

Giving you the facts about Fire Doors in HMO's

What is a House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO)?

HMO is a term that is used to define accommodation that is owned by a private landlord and shared among a number of people. HMOs are defined by the Housing Act 2004 sections 254 to 259. There are a range of different types of accommodation that could fall under this definition, depending on how many people are living there and what the living arrangements are. As a general rule, where there are three or more tenants in a property who make up more than one household with shared toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities, this could be an HMO.

This could cover:

- Several bedsits in one building
- A hostel
- Student Halls of Residence (Not operated by the educational establishment)
- A house shared by three or more people who do not form a single household
- Certain converted blocks of flats

Who is responsible for fire doors and fire safety in an HMO?

The landlord (or sometimes the managing agent) is responsible for fire doors and fire safety of the HMO

They are governed by The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations: 2006¹ and have legal responsibility under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order: 2005 (FSO) to ensure fire safety measures are in place. The FSO was recently updated to emphasize that it covers the doors between the domestic premises and the common parts of the building.

Following an assessment under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, a local authority could take enforcement action under the Housing Act if they consider there is a risk of harm associated with exposure to uncontrolled fire and associated smoke, but only after consulting the Fire and Rescue Authority covering the HMO.

The landlord (or agent) must provide tenants with fire safety information and should carry out regular Fire Risk Assessments and inspection and maintenance on all fire safety measures.

¹ Scotland - Housing (Scotland) Act: 2006

¹ Wales - 2.33 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014

¹ NI – Houses of Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

Where will I find fire doors in an HMO?

The doors that protect the means of escape route are likely to be fire doors, fitted with door closers and cold smoke seals.

Landlords may choose to add additional fire doors to kitchen areas to provide additional protection, even if they are not on the means of escape route.

Fire doors create a barrier to fire and toxic cold smoke and prevent it from travelling around a building, keeping the damage to a small area, allowing for evacuation and safe access for the emergency services.

Check the requirements of the local authority where your HMO is located. They may require additional protection to comply with their local licensing conditions.

What makes a fire door work?

Fire doors fulfil a life-saving role in preventing the spread of smoke and fire for a period dependent on their fire classification. A fire door is more than a typical door leaf, it is a complex system of components that must work together to perform in the event of a fire to save lives. An effective fire door assembly will include some, if not all, of the following:

Intumescent seals	Smoke seals*
Latch or Lock	Hinges
Signage*	Door closer*
Other ironmongery*	Fire door glazing*
Frame/wall sealing	Threshold seals*
Air transfer grille (ATG)*	

*if required

All these components play a critical role in fire performance. 1 small change = 1 big impact on fire performance. Always check the fire door certificate for compatible specification.

In addition to the components, it is imperative that the doors are correctly installed, regularly inspected, and correctly maintained.

Tenants - How can I check my fire doors?

There are 5 basic checks that you can do on your fire doors, although they cannot replace a full inspection by a specialist, they can highlight any immediate issues:

1. Look for labels or similar marking that show the door is certified.
2. Ensure either the door or frame has been fitted with separate or combined fire and smoke seals and that the door closes correctly with an even gap all-round of about 3mm.
3. Also check that the door closer is fitted securely and can close the door fully into its frame when opened to any angle.
4. Check the fire rated hinges are fixed firmly and securely into the frame with no missing screws.
5. Make sure the door is not damaged and never wedged or propped open.

You can also watch the 5 Step Fire Door check video:

<https://www.firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk/toolkit/five-step-fire-door-check/>

Tenants - Who do I report issues to?

In the first instance, contact your landlord or managing agent and if you are still concerned, you should then contact your local council or fire and rescue services for advice.



Tenants - Fire Safety in your HMO

The following are checks you should regularly do to ensure your HMO is safe for you:

- Check all fire doors are in good working order and never propped or wedged open. Do the 5 Step Fire Door Check
- Check all smoke alarms are working on a regular basis.
- Keeps the means of escape route clear at all times.
- Do not store combustibles near sources of ignition.
- Make sure that everyone in your building knows the fire plan.
- Check that all sources of ignition are out/off (cooker, smoking materials, candles etc.) and electrical points are unplugged before bed.
- Do not overload plug sockets.
- Do not smoke in the house. If you do, make sure it's all extinguished before you leave the room or go to bed.
- Never leave cooking unattended.
- Report any fire safety concerns immediately.

Disclaimer:

Note: Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of advice given, the BWF cannot accept liability for loss or damage arising from the use of the information supplied in this publication.



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