



Health & Safety

A guide for cottage owners

Welcome

to the Sykes Cottages

Health and Safety Guide.



Here you'll find information on some of the main things you need to consider when letting out a holiday home.

The items that we have set out below are intended to act as prompts and help you focus on the key areas for the safe letting of your home. Health and Safety needn't be scary and most of it is about simple common sense.

If you get the right advice and use competent tradesmen you shouldn't go far wrong.

Important

The information in this document is intended only as a guide. It contains simplified health and safety guidance based on complex and changing legislation, and does not constitute legal advice. Whilst we endeavour to keep it up to date, we cannot be held liable for errors and omissions; and compliance with the law remains your responsibility.

Remember it is the responsibility of every holiday home owner to ensure that their property complies with current health and safety legislation and that owners working with Sykes commit to do this as part of their contractual agreement.

It is your responsibility to make sure that your property is safe and compliant – you have a duty of care towards any guests at the property.

If you have concerns over compliance, you must seek professional advice, or contact your regulator or local authority.

Before acting on any information provided, please seek any necessary professional advice to ensure that any steps taken are appropriate as we are not legal, safety or financial professionals.

Gas & Electric

Overview

The point of health and safety legislation is to take reasonable steps to ensure dangers to guests are minimised. It is impossible to totally eliminate all risks and dangers but it is important to make reasonable efforts to not only minimise dangers, but to show that you have done so.

Gas

Gas is generally a safe and effective fuel for cooking and heating but it does need treating with respect. Poor maintenance cannot only get you into a lot of trouble, it can also be a potential danger for your guests. A Gas Safe-registered person must check gas installations, appliances and flues every 12 months, and a record of the check must be made available to guests.

Key things to remember:

- You must have a full safety check covering every gas appliance and flue every 12 months.
- You will get a Landlord's Gas Safety Certificate following this check which you'll need to display prominently on the premises.
- You should ensure all gas appliances and flues are serviced regularly and according to the manufacturers' instructions.
- All repairs, servicing and maintenance (including your annual safety check) must be conducted by a Gas Safe-registered engineer.
- You should be on the lookout for any faults or damage that may occur in between professional checks and act on any concerns immediately.
- Don't take risks! If you have any doubts about an appliance, connection or flue, turn off the gas and have it checked immediately by a Gas Safe-registered engineer.
- Carbon monoxide has no smell and leaks can be deadly. Make sure there is a working carbon monoxide detector fitted to the manufacturer's instructions. As a minimum there should be one alarm in every room that contains a solid fuel burning appliance.

- Keep the instructions for all your appliances and make sure there's a copy available for guests.
- Gas cookers should operate normally and safely. They should be fitted with burner caps and on/off control knobs.
- Keep a record of any servicing, installations or repairs you have done for at least 6 years. Should there ever be an incident this will help to prove that you acted correctly.

Electricity

All mains electrical equipment, new or used, supplied with the accommodation, must be safe. If it complies with an acceptable standard, e.g. a British/European Standard, it will normally meet safety requirements. These safety requirements cover:

- labelling, construction, design, and manufacture;
- insulation and earthing;
- protection from electric shock;
- adequate guards for radiant heaters or moving parts;
- the need to provide instructions for safe use.

You must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that electrical equipment is safe and correctly labelled. It is strongly advisable to have the equipment checked by a qualified electrician before you start holiday letting. It would be good practice to have the equipment checked at regular intervals thereafter. You should obtain and retain test reports detailing the equipment, the tests carried out, and the results. You should make a copy of the instructions for all electrical appliances available to the guests.

The Law

Relevant legislation in this area includes:

- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- The Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994
- Plugs and sockets: The Plugs and Sockets etc (Safety) Regulations 1994
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Gas Cooking Appliances (Safety) Regulations 1989
- The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015

More info?

More useful information is available from:

- The Gas Safety Advice Line - Tel. 0800 300 363
- A free advice service offering information on gas safety
- The Health & Safety Executive Website - www.hse.gov.uk/gas
- www.hse.gov.uk/electricity
- The Gas Safe Website - www.gassaferegister.co.uk
- Contains useful tips and advice as well as allowing you to search for a registered engineer.
- Gas Emergency Line - Tel. 0800 111 999
- The number to use in an emergency if you suspect a leak.
- Ensure you have opened windows and turned off the gas supply.

Fire Safety

Landlords have certain legal obligations when it comes to fire safety and protection of their properties and the safety of people who reside in their premises. However, it is not as simple as ensuring there is a couple of fire extinguishers to hand – fire safety largely depends on the potential risks and the different types of buildings can cause confusion.

Legislation requires that you carry out fire risk assessments in all areas

of your property. This process will identify any fire hazards and who is at risk and decide if anything needs to be done to remove or reduce that risk.

Fire is a real danger in all types of property so it's important you've properly considered the risks and taken steps to protect your guests.

The most important things you should do are:

- Conduct a fire risk assessment and identify hazards. There's some good advice on the government's Communities website (www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety) along with an example risk assessment form you can use.
- Take appropriate steps to reduce the risks. Whether it's providing suitable fire extinguishers or deciding to forbid smoking, there are always things you can do to reduce the risk from fire. Above all it's key you consider what's appropriate to your property and not just use a 'one size fits all' approach.
- Keep the risks, and your fire safety measures, under review. This is especially important if you make any changes to the property, its layout, or the type of guests you allow.

Reducing the risks:

Whilst you should always act on a risk assessment that's tailored to your property, there are a few things that every cottage owner needs to provide. Some of these are listed below:

Smoke alarms

A minimum of one on each floor. These should be radio interlinked which means that when one alarm goes off, it sends a signal to the others which are also activated. Detectors should be tested weekly and kept free of dust.

In larger properties, it's possible you might need a more advanced mains-powered system. If in doubt, seek professional advice.

Fire blanket

Fitted in cooking areas according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Fire extinguisher

The type you can buy from a DIY store should be adequate for most small properties. Check whether you need more than one. As a rule of thumb guests shouldn't have to travel more than 25 metres (80 feet) to reach an extinguisher.

Check the instructions to ensure extinguishers are the right size and type for your premises. You should also remember to have them serviced (where applicable) or replaced when the expiry date is reached.

Emergency lighting/torch

On each floor, to help guests to find their way out in an emergency.

Other things you should do:

- Ensure all your furniture meets fire safety regulations. These are set out in the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988. New furniture bought since 1st March 1990 should meet these requirements but it makes sense to double check (there should be a permanent label on each item of upholstered furniture).
- Keep a copy of your fire risk assessment (remember to keep it up to date).
- Consider providing simple fire escape instructions for guests in your welcome pack, along with emergency contact numbers.
- If your property has an open fire, you should provide an appropriate fire guard with a mesh that prevents sparks getting through as well as a companion set and a bucket for hot ashes. You also need to make sure the chimney is swept annually.

The Law

Relevant legislation in this area includes:

Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988

Smoke Detectors Act 1991

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England)

Regulations 2015

More info?

More useful information is available from:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11085/payingguests.pdf

A useful Government leaflet on fire safety. Also includes instructions on conducting a fire risk assessment

www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety

Government website on fire safety and your responsibilities

www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/fire.htm

Fire Safety tips from the Health & Safety Executive

Safety Around Your Property

Child Safety

If your property accepts children as guests, it is very important that you consider their safety. Make sure that any equipment you provide (such as highchairs, cots or bunk beds) is clean, well maintained and in good order. All equipment must meet the relevant British and European safety standards.

In general the best way to ensure you have safe equipment is to buy new from a reputable retailer. Here are some important things you need to consider:

Cots

- Cot bars should be between 50mm and 95mm apart. Larger gaps than this can trap a baby's head, arms or legs.
- The mattress should fit snugly with no gaps between the cot frame and the mattress.
- The height from the top of the mattress to the top of the cot should be at least 600mm.
- Cots should have no sharp edges and be well maintained.

Bunk Beds

- Should have the original ladders, properly secured.
- Should have guard rails around the top bunk which extend at least 10cm higher than the top of the mattress.
- Mattresses should fit snugly with no gaps.
- There should be no gaps anywhere which are less than 60mm or larger than 75mm.

Highchairs

- Should be without wheels, or have a suitable locking device.
- Should have at least a 3-point harness.
- Should have a permanent label which advises the harness must always be used and that children are never to be left unattended in the chair.

General

- If young children are allowed and your property has stairs then there should be a secure stairgate provided.

- Cleaning fluids and sharp implements should be kept out of reach of children.
- Avoid furniture with sharp corners where possible (such as glass coffee tables) or consider offering corner protectors.

Windows and Glass Doors

Key things to remember:

- Glass doors or partitions should be made from safety glass.
- If there's a risk that someone could walk into them, glass doors/partitions should have stickers on them – one at child eye level (about 80cm) and one at adult eye level (about 1.5m). Stickers are readily available from DIY stores or online for minimal cost.
- If they're accessible to a child, windows should not open more than 10cm. If they do, you'll need to fit window restrictors.

Stairs and Balconies

- All staircases should have a hand rail at a suitable height (at least 90cm) which is firmly secured.
- Gaps between the railings on stairs and landings should be less than 10cm so that children can't fall through or become trapped.
- If you have an unusual staircase, such as one which is narrow or spiral, you should let us know so we can mention it in your property description. You should also make sure each set of guests is aware when they arrive.
- If your property has a balcony you should make sure it's of sound construction and in good condition.
- As with staircases you should make sure the gaps between railings are not more than 10cm. The overall height of the railings should be at least 1m.
- Make sure there's nothing left near the balcony that children could be tempted to stand on.

Swimming Pools and Hot Tubs

These can be a big asset to your property and they certainly help to bring in bookings. However, you do need to make sure you fully understand the risks and act accordingly to remove or minimise them. Do this, and your ownership should be trouble free.

As a landlord, you should already have a liability insurance policy but be aware that not all liability policies include swimming pool liability coverage. You may have to pay an additional amount to include any claims resulting from the 'attractive nuisance' that pools and hot tubs can sometimes be considered.

Swimming Pools

- Make sure the pool area is well maintained and kept clean and hygienic.
- Keep records of pool disinfection and chemical dosing and keep all chemicals locked away.
- Display clear signage advising that the pool is not supervised, that diving is not allowed (where the depth is under 1.5m), that children must be supervised, and advising of emergency contact information. You will also need appropriate depth markings. The rules on signage are quite specific and will vary according to the size and depth of your pool and who you're intending will use it. The Health & Safety Executive's website is a good place to start for the latest guidance (see link overleaf).

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- Provide appropriate rescue equipment close to the poolside and make sure it's checked and maintained regularly.
- Where possible you should provide a means of blocking access to the pool when not in use.
- There should be no diving boards or platforms.

Hot Tubs and Saunas

- Provide clear, written instructions for guests and appropriate signage to warn them of the risks.
- Follow the cleaning, chemical dosing and maintenance instructions set out by the manufacturer and ensure you maintain good records.

The Law

Relevant legislation in this area includes:

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and associated regulations e.g. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

More info?

Useful information is available from:

www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/leisure/swimming-pool.htm

Guidance from the Health & Safety Executive including a downloadable booklet

www.bishta.org.uk

Website of the British and Irish Spa and Hot Tub Association

Private Water Supplies

If your property is not on mains water then you need to abide by a piece of legislation called the Private Water Supplies Regulations 2009. This essentially means the local authority has a duty to check samples of your water once a year and must complete a risk assessment every five years.

If this isn't happening, you should contact your local authority without delay as they have a legal obligation to carry out these checks. It is, however, your responsibility to keep a record of test results plus any remedial work to rectify problems. Keep hold of these records for at least 6 years.

The Law

Relevant legislation in this area includes:

The Private Water Supplies Regulations 2009.

More info?

More useful information is available from:

<http://dwi.defra.gov.uk/consumers/advice-leaflets/pws-newregs.pdf>

'New Private Water Supply Regulations' - a leaflet produced by DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

Outside

Outside space is a great asset to any property. A bit of thought and a common sense approach to safety should be all you need to ensure all your guests continue to have a great time without incident.

Some things to consider:

- Give attention to water features such as fountains, ponds or streams. If you have any of these on your property, make sure they're mentioned in your description and if appropriate they are fenced off – your insurer may have requirements in this regard also.
- If your description says your garden is enclosed then make sure it is. This means no gaps in the fencing and doors and gates that have latches and that stay shut.
- If you provide garden furniture or a barbeque make sure it's safe and in good condition.
- Don't leave tools or machinery like lawnmowers lying around – keep them locked away.
- If you have water, oil or septic tanks they should be securely sealed.
- Maintain paths and patios to reduce the likelihood of trips and if there are any large drops on your property, make sure they're marked and/or fenced off.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. As we mentioned earlier, Health and Safety is mostly about taking simple common sense precautions, getting and following the right advice and using competent tradesmen.



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