**Dear Resident,**

We recognise that safety in your home has always been a crucial concern. With the publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report on Wednesday, 4 September 2024, fire safety, particularly in high-rise buildings, is once again in the spotlight. We understand that this may bring up concerns, and we want to reassure you that your safety remains our highest priority.

**Your safety is our top priority.** That’s why we want to share with you what we’re doing to ensure your home remains a safe and secure place to live. Below, you’ll find an overview of our ongoing fire safety efforts and how you can contribute to keeping our community safe.

**Working Together for Your Safety**

**Your Role as a Resident**

While we’re committed to safeguarding our buildings, your actions are crucial too. Together, we can create a safer environment for everyone.

* **Keep Access Routes Clear:** Please avoid parking in areas that may block emergency access. Quick, unobstructed access is essential for emergency services in the event of a fire.
* **Maintain Clear Walkways:** Make sure that hallways and corridors are free from any clutter or obstacles. Clear paths help everyone evacuate safely if needed.
* **Protect Fire Safety Equipment:** Fire doors, alarms, and other safety devices are there to protect you. Please never tamper with or disable them. Ensure fire doors are not propped open and that automatic door closers are intact.

**Fire Alarms and Evacuation Plans**

Having functioning smoke and heat alarms is critical to your safety.

* **For Council Tenants:** We’ll replace any faulty alarms. Please test them regularly and report any issues to our repairs service immediately.
* **For Leaseholders:** It’s your responsibility to maintain these alarms, including in sub-let properties.

**Why We Don’t Use Communal Fire Alarms**

Most purpose-built blocks in England follow a ‘stay put’ strategy. This means fires are contained within the flat of origin, allowing you to stay safe until the Fire Brigade arrives. Communal alarms can often lead to false alarms and unnecessary evacuations, which may hinder emergency efforts. **Stay Put Strategy:** This is the strategy used in most of our high-rise buildings. **Simultaneous Evacuation:** In certain buildings, like supported living accommodation and converted houses, a communal alarm system is used to prompt evacuation for everyone. If you’re unsure of your building’s strategy, check the fire safety information at your building’s entrance or contact us at hmfiresafety@lambeth.gov.uk

**Preventing Home Fires**

Home fires often start from cooking, smoking, candles, or faulty electrical items. Please follow the London Fire Brigade’s home fire safety advice found online to minimise these risks. We’ve also seen a rise in fires caused by lithium batteries in e-bikes and e-scooters. These can ignite rapidly, especially when charging with incompatible chargers or faulty products bought online. Do not store your e-bikes and scooters in communal spaces.

**There are a number of ways you can reduce the risks when charging lithium batteries:**

* Only ever use the correct charger for your battery, otherwise you can greatly increase the risk of fire.
* Always buy any replacement chargers from a reputable seller. Using the wrong charger could mean that too much power is put into the battery, leading to failure and a dangerous fire.
* Always avoid general ‘multi-plug’ chargers that fit different models unless specifically approved by the battery manufacturer, as they may not provide the right power for your battery and may greatly increase the risk of fire.

If a fire does occur, stay calm, evacuate everyone in your home, and if possible, close doors to contain the fire. Always call 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade.

**Building Safety: Keeping You Informed**

Since the tragic Grenfell Tower fire, more stringent safety measures have been put in place under the Building Safety Act 2022, particularly for high-rise buildings over 18 metres. In Lambeth, this includes 84 blocks. These buildings now require a detailed Building Safety Case (BSC), which includes:

* **Fire Risk Assessments External Wall (FRAEW):** We are conducting thorough inspections of the wall systems, including taking samples to ensure our buildings meet all safety standards.
* **Structural Surveys:** We are actively completing surveys to ensure each building can withstand fire, adding crucial data to our Building Safety Case.
* **Golden Thread of Information:** This is a collection of all safety data for each building, and it’s a key part of creating a reliable safety case for every high-rise.

**Fire Safety Act 2021 and New Regulations**

The Fire Safety Act 2021 has clarified that the Fire Safety Order now applies to structures, external walls, and flat entrance doors in multi-occupied buildings. The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, effective from January 2023, are a direct response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and include several new safety measures for our high-rise buildings:

* **Electronic Building Plans:** We’ve provided these to the London Fire Brigade (LFB).
* **Property Information Boxes (PIBs):** Installed in blocks of seven storeys or above, these boxes includes orientation, on-arrival information, floor plans, vertical sections detailing all floors and flat numbers, specific firefighting equipment, significant fire safety issues and evacuation strategy.

**Resident Engagement: Your Voice in Fire Safety**

We’re committed to involving you in our fire safety efforts. That’s why we’re introducing a digital app that will allow you to report potential fire hazards in real-time. For instance, if you notice an escape route blocked by rubbish, you can report it through the app, and our housing management team will address it promptly. This will help us build a data-driven approach to better understand and address fire safety issues. Plus, we’ll be setting up a residents’ forum to help us prioritise resources where they’re needed most. If you live in a high-rise block of seven storeys or more and are interested in becoming a Building Safety Estate Champion, please contact us at hmfiresafety@lambeth.gov.uk

For more information on Lambeth Council’s fire safety policies, please visit <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/housing/housing-repairs/fire-safety/fire-safety-your-home>.

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation and commitment to keeping our community safe.

Your sincerely

Housing Management Fire Safety

Lambeth Council