

THE WALKWAYS

Maximising Safety in Your Home

Frequently Asked Questions

July 2021



Maximising Safety in Your Home

Frequently Asked Questions

As part of the refurbishment of your homes and buildings, we are committed to maximising safety for you and your neighbours. We have worked with the London Fire Brigade, RBKC Fire Safety Team and designers to ensure that every opportunity to enhance safety is taken. This includes the installation of sprinklers, state-of-the-art alarms, new atrium rooflights, and alternative windows to the current fire curtains installed outside some of your homes.

The information below answers some of the questions residents have raised so far about the necessary safety improvements to your homes and buildings.

Why are sprinklers being installed?

The London Fire Brigade have identified that given the current configuration of the Walkways, sprinklers are a requirement to ensure maximum safety for residents and fire fighters.

Sprinklers would help to suppress any flames, heat and smoke in the event of a fire. They will protect both the occupants of a flat where a fire may start, and other residents within the building as well.

To do this, sprinklers need to be installed in all rooms of every home in the Walkways.

Why do you need to install sprinklers in my home and not in the communal area?

To ensure the safety of everyone living in a residential building, sprinklers are best located within the flats where the source of a fire is most likely to start.

The communal area needs to be kept free of any combustible items, in line with fire safety guidance. Therefore, there is no significant benefit to installing sprinklers in these areas.

Where in my home do the sprinklers need to be installed?

Sprinklers will need to be installed in all habitable rooms and hallways. This includes your living room, bedrooms, hallways, kitchens as well as bathrooms with floor area greater than 5m² and cupboards with floor area greater than 2m².

What work will be involved in installing the sprinklers?

Most sprinklers will be installed in a new 'dropped' ceiling along with low-energy light fittings. The pipework and cables will be hidden behind a new plasterboard ceiling. Sprinkler heads and light fittings will be integrated into the new ceiling.

We are exploring installing a ventilation system within the new ceilings, this would also be hidden behind the plasterboard with small vents visible in each room of your home.

An asbestos survey needs to be carried out prior to the installation of the sprinklers or any other ceiling work. If asbestos is found, the existing ceiling and any asbestos will be carefully removed.



Above: ceiling mounted sprinkler

What lighting options are there with the new ceilings?

Below are some images of the new spotlight and pendant light fitting options. The fittings will have low energy LED lightbulbs. An LED bulb can last for 20-30 years in comparison to a halogen bulb which has a working life of only two years. By swapping ten halogen bulbs for LED bulbs, savings of £112 a year can be made.



Above left: pendant light fitting

Above right: spotlight light fitting

How disruptive is the work?

All homes need to have sprinklers so these works will involve all leaseholders and tenants.

Some homes in the Walkways currently have an asbestos coating on the ceiling. This needs to be carefully removed before the new ceiling can be installed. This means the work in some homes will take longer.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a term used for the fibrous forms of several naturally occurring silicate minerals. The fibres have high tensile strength and chemical, electrical and heat resistance. This means asbestos containing materials have been used extensively in building products such as roofing, cladding, tiles, insulation and fire-resistant internal panelling. Many homes built or refurbished before 2000 contain asbestos.

If asbestos containing materials are in good condition and are not disturbed, they pose no health risks. All asbestos is recorded on our asbestos register. You may ask for this information at any time. When tenants move into new homes, we tell them about the asbestos that is recorded on our asbestos register.

LWNT employ specialist independent contractors to carry out asbestos surveys and tests. If the survey recommends the removal of a material that contains asbestos, then we will arrange for a separate contractor to safely remove it.

What will you do to minimise disruption?

The scale of noise and disruption to a community in recovery cannot be underestimated. However, we will offer a range of measures including:

- Strict restrictions on works to only take place between:
 - » 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday.
 - » At no time on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays.
- Restricted hours for high impact activities:
 - » 9am to noon and 2pm to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.
 - » At no time on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays.

We will look to provide welfare facilities for use by residents during the hours of work (8am – 6pm, Monday - Friday).

We retain a handful of empty flats for temporary use, for those impacted by the work and who cannot stay in their home.

Whilst the works are in progress, your home will be subject to health and safety regulations. You may not be permitted on site throughout the duration of some of the works.

What happens if I need help with moving?

We want the moving process to be as simple and easy as possible, and will offer packing materials for all residents undergoing refurbishment works. You will be responsible for packing up all personal items and need to be stored and removed. If you require assistance, we can discuss storage and removal options, and any additional support available.

Will the sprinklers go off easily if smoke is detected?

No. The individual sprinkler head only activates when it reaches a high temperature of 69 degree Celsius*. They will not activate on detection of smoke (e.g. from a toaster, candle etc.). Therefore, only sprinkler heads above a fire will activate and this would generally be limited to the room that is the source of a fire, and ensuring that the water is directed to the fire.

**Standard ambient temperatures within flats will never reach this activation temperature unless there is a fire. False activations are rare with these systems.*

Is there an alternative to having sprinklers in my home?

No. To ensure the safety of everyone in the buildings it is necessary to install sprinklers in all of the homes. The sprinkler heads are designed to only activate when there is an actual fire.

LWNT have installed a sprinkler trial in several flats that have been recently refurbished to discuss with residents the impact and benefits of their installation.

Are there other benefits to installing the ceilings?

As part of the detailed design phase, we are exploring installing a ventilation system which will be incorporated into the new ceilings. This would keep the air in your home healthy and extract stale air from kitchens and bathrooms. Further details of this system will be communicated with residents in the weeks and months ahead.

Why are we replacing fire curtains with windows?

The fire curtains were a temporary measure to protect the communal area in the event of a fire. The curtains will be replaced with new fire resisting windows and frames to all bathrooms and kitchens that face into the communal area. This will provide a permanent solution as the fire curtains rely on detection, ongoing maintenance and testing to ensure they continue to function as intended.

There are other benefits to installing the new windows including improving the energy efficiency of your homes which will lower your heating bills, and an improved aesthetic to the communal areas. The windows will also reduce noise from the communal areas into your homes.

Will I be able to open my new fire resisting kitchen and bathroom windows?

These windows will need to be fixed closed. The reason for this is to prevent the spread of smoke into the communal area. This means a new ventilation system will be installed in everyone's homes to provide ventilation to kitchens and bathrooms.

Any openable window will enable the spread of fire and smoke into the common areas.

How do the fire resisting windows work?

Fire resisting glazing is specialist glass that has been demonstrated to stop the spread of fire and smoke. The glass also stops the transfer of heat. Therefore, in the event of a fire in a flat, the glass will prevent the spread of fire and smoke to the communal area.

When are you likely to start installing the windows and sprinklers?

The installation of sprinklers will start in 3 - 6 months beginning with empty properties first.

We have already started installing them as part of the internal refurbishment works for homes let through the Local Lettings Plan or Refurbishment Decant Scheme.

How high will the new ceilings be?

Currently all of the homes have a floor to ceiling height of 2.365m. The new height will be 2.230m. Although the ceiling height will be lowered it will enable new low energy lighting and potentially a new ventilation system throughout the home. Residents already living in recently refurbished flats have new ceilings, and residents who have attended our Open House events will be familiar with the new height.

I am a leaseholder. Will I be charged for the works?

Leaseholders will not be charged for the installation of the sprinklers, or enabling works for them. There may be a small maintenance charge as part of your annual service charge to maintain the safety of your home and building. Any future repairs would be charged to the building as whole.

Contact Us

Tel: **0800 389 2005**

Email: **LancWestRefurb@rbkc.gov.uk**

App: **WeAreW11**

Instagram: **@lancasterwestneighbourhoodteam**

Youtube: **Lancaster West Neighbourhood Team**

This publication has been printed on sustainable paper accredited by the FSC (Forestry Stewardship Council) using vegetable oil based inks. The material used has also been carbon balanced with The World Land Trust. For further information please visit www.carbonbalancedpaper.com. This booklet is fully compostable.

