



## **Fire Safety and your legal duty as a leaseholder.**

The property you live in is a purpose built flat and is required to be compliant with fire safety legislation. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 covers the common areas of blocks of flats (lobbies/stairs/landings) and is designed to protect occupants of flats against the risk of fire.

### **Functions of flat front doors**

- To stop a fire inside a flat 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 flats spreading into a flat, where residents may be sheltering until the fire service arrives.

As Dacorum Borough Council blocks of flats operate a “stay put” fire policy, it is especially important that all flat entrance doors are able to prevent a fire spreading throughout the building.

### **I inherited my door when I purchased the property (either from the council or from a previous leaseholder). Do I need to do anything?**

Yes – over time legal requirements and fire safety standards have changed. Therefore, a door installed when the building was constructed or prior to 2000 may not meet the necessary standard. As a result you may need to upgrade some elements or replace your door to ensure the flat door meets current standards.

### **How can I check if my door meets current standards?**

If you inherited a 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 flat 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 can't find any information about your door, there are some simple checks you can undertake to confirm if it is a fire door set:

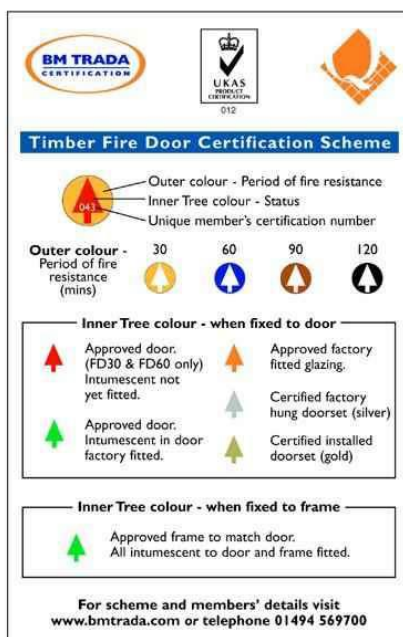
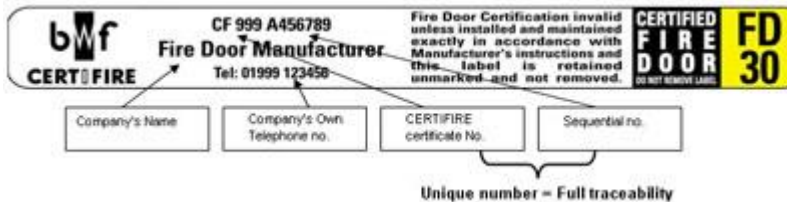
1. Tap/knock your door, does it sound hollow?  
Look inside your letter box, does the door look like it's made of solid wood? Fire doors have to be of solid timber construction.



2. Measure the width of the door (the thin edge) – fire doors must be a minimum of 44mm (4.4cm) thick. If your door has panelled sections and the thickness of these timber panels is less than 44mm thick (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, which bear the CE mark (as shown).



4. Look for a coloured plug in the door itself or any label or markings, which may indicate that the door has been fitted by either TRADA's Q-Mark scheme or BWF's Certifire scheme (picture below shows certified label/markings).



5. If your door has 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 is unlikely that the door is a fire door.
6. Is there a 25mm door stop fitted around the door frame which the door closes to? Or is there an intumescent smoke seal (or combination) fitted? (Picture of a smoke seal below).



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 jamb closer, as shown below.



8. UPVC doors are not accepted as fire doors.

9. Doors should not have any large openings in them, such as cat flaps. Letterboxes are permitted if there is no other provision for the delivery of post. Letterboxes should be fire resistant (with an intumescent liner) and fitted in the lower third of the door. If being purchased separately, they should be purchased from a reputable supplier and fitted by a competent carpenter. Fire Door sets that come already fitted with letter boxes and ironmongery should be supplied with a certificate of testing which indicates its fire rating.

If your door meets all of these criteria it is likely that it meets the standard and will perform effectively in a fire.

### **I want to change my flat entrance door**

No door should be changed without the specific consent of the Council. If you would like to change your flat front door you must firstly seek permission from the Asset Team Leader, Property & Place, Tel: 01442 228000.

### **What standard do I need to achieve?**

- All new fire door sets to flats must be FD30s (they must have a minimum fire resistance of half an hour) standard in accordance with BS476: Part 22 1987 or BS EN 1634-1 2000.
- New flat doors should 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 Certifire Scheme.

If you have changed your door in the past without notifying the Council, please submit details of the work to Property and Place without delay. As long as the new door meets fire safety standards, the Council will arrange for consent to be granted retrospectively. If the alteration does not meet these standards the Council will require you to reinstate the door at your own expense to comply with Building Regulations and meet with the requirements of the Fire Safety Order.

### **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.

## **Finding a competent builder to install a new fire door**

Installing a fire door correctly is as important as ensuring the door itself is to the correct standard. We recommend that homeowners only use 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 tradesperson.

Certifying company and scheme Website

- BRE Group – LPCB scheme, LPS 1271 installation of fire and security door sets [www.redbooklive.com/search](http://www.redbooklive.com/search)
- BM Trada Q Mark: OP37 Fire door installation scheme [www.bmtrada.co.uk](http://www.bmtrada.co.uk)
- Warrington Fire FIRAS scheme for fire Doors [www.warringtoncertification.com/firas/firedoors.html](http://www.warringtoncertification.com/firas/firedoors.html)

## **Replacing or removing internal flat doors and internal layout alterations**

Like flat entrance doors, certain doors inside your flat i.e. the kitchen door, or if you live in a maisonette all the doors between a room and your staircase, are also fire doors. Their purpose is to prevent a fire from spreading from the room it started in to another room and to stop the fire and smoke preventing you leaving the flat. If you want to remove or replace any internal doors or alter the layout of the flat in any way, you must get building control consent. We must make sure that the work you want to carry out won't prevent escape if a fire starts in the home.

If the work includes anything that includes knocking or drilling a hole in a wall, floor or ceiling i.e. to install a flue or run cabling, we also need to ensure that the integrity of the wall, floor or ceiling is reinstated. This is so that fire and smoke can't pass through into another part of the building.

## **Replacing windows or the installation of security grilles or shutters**

In flats located at ground and first floor level, or in flats accessed from communal walkways/balconies, the living areas and bedroom windows are designed to be escape windows so residents can use them to escape through in the event of a fire.

If you would like to replace your windows, they too will need to meet Building Regulation requirements regarding their design and the size of the opening required. The council cannot, where a window is an escape window, provide consent for security grilles or shutters to be installed as the window must be maintained unobstructed to enable escape.

## **Installing smoke detection**

Dacorum Borough Council works closely with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. We strongly recommend that all homeowners install smoke detection within their homes. If you don't already have smoke detection, please contact Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and arrange a home safety visit. The fire crew will fit smoke detection free of charge, where necessary.

Request a home safety visit at

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/actweb/fireandrescue/hfscformrequest.htm> or call 0300 1234 046

### **Replacing doors or doing alterations without consent**

If you believe that your door meets the necessary standard, you can apply for retrospective consent for the alteration from us. This is the same for alterations. However, you may have to reinstate /alter the layout or features of the flat if the work carried out does not comply with Building Regulation requirements.

If you do not get the necessary consents, it may be difficult to sell the property in the future, as solicitors now require more detailed information regarding fire protection within blocks of flats as part of the conveyancing process.

### **When do I have to do this?**

As soon as possible. No timescales have been outlined in this notice, however it is expected that this will be complied with in a reasonable amount of time, taking into account,

- The financial impact to yourself.
- The time to carry out the work.

### **The law**

There are three main pieces of legislation which apply to fire safety in residential buildings.

- **The Building Regulations 2000** - (also known as building control regulations) which requires all homeowners to comply with building control requirements when undertaking any alterations to their property
- **The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** – which requires lessees to cooperate and coordinate with the council to ensure the risk from fire is reduced as far as possible.
- **The Housing Act 2004** – which requires leaseholders to reduce the risk from fire within the home (particularly relevant where a property is sublet). Leaseholders have a duty to ensure this and this requirement may be detailed in your lease.

**Leaseholders in Dacorum Borough Council properties can contact Leaseholder Services on 01442 228799 for further clarification.**