

Building Safety Bill: Report Stage Amendments to improve electrical safety for Social Housing and Leasehold Properties in High Rise Residential Buildings (HRRBs)

Electrical Safety First is the only UK charity dedicated to reducing deaths, injuries and fires caused by domestic electrical accidents.

1. Key Messages

We ask Members to support the amendments tabled by Andy Slaughter MP to ensure that the Building Safety Bill includes:

- Mandatory electrical safety checks at a period not exceeding every five years in the Social Rented Sector in HRRBs.
- Mandatory electrical safety checks at a period not exceeding every five years in the Leasehold Sector in HRRBs.

2. Mandatory Electrical Safety Checks

From 1st July 2020, “The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations (PRS) 2020”¹ requires all dwellings in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in England to complete an electrical safety check at least every five years. These regulations were introduced by the Government to help reduce accidents and injuries caused by electricity. Disappointingly, the regulations do not extend to socially rented housing or leasehold properties in HRRBs. These proposed amendments will rectify that situation.

¹ The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2020/9780111191934>

3. Urgency

Electrical Safety First believes HRRBs must be covered by electrical safety checks because:

- **Fires caused by electrical sources of ignition in HRRBs are increasing.** The latest analysis of Home Office fire data by the Charity shows 355 accidental electrical fires occurred across England last year in purpose-built high-rise buildings that include 10 or more flats. This figure has increased over the past three years, with 301 electrical fires recorded during 2016/17 and 309 recorded during 2017/18².
- **Electricity causes more fires than gas.** The number of residential fires caused by electricity are six times higher than gas³. This was a key reason why the Government introduced electrical safety checks in the PRS. It should also be noted that gas installations are now not typically installed in HRRBs, whereas the electrical installation will be present in every room in every dwelling in every HRRB.
- **In England, 53% of all accidental dwelling fires are caused by an electrical source of ignition⁴.** Home Office statistics analysed by Electrical Safety First show fires caused by domestic installation faults remain consistently high despite the overall number of domestic fires decreasing over the years. This suggests that safety issues with electrical installations are not being identified or adequately tackled.

4. Residential Tower Block Fires

Three high profile fires at Grenfell Tower, Lakanal House and Shepherds Court were all caused by an electrical source of ignition. **Each of these residential tower blocks was mixed tenure.** The mixed tenure across these three buildings demonstrates the critical

² Electrical Safety First analysis <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2020/04/charity-calls-for-electrical-safety-checks-white-goods-register-in-tower-blocks/>

³ Figures from Electrical Safety First analysis of Home Office Dataset <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-incident-level-datasets>

⁴ Electrical Safety First analysis of Home Office Statistics 2018-19 <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/what-we-do/our-policies/westminster/statistics-england/>



importance of the need for a common preventative inspecting and testing regime for HRRBs to ensure the safety of all residents. We urge all MPs to look favourably at Andy Slaughter's amendments.

5. Social Rented Sector

Electrical Safety First has consulted landlords from the Social Rented Sector (SRS) on their views on mandatory five-yearly electrical safety checks⁵. This consultation was responded to by SRS providers, who house tens of thousands of tenants. **97% backed mandatory five-yearly checks for the SRS.** This clearly demonstrates strong support for this vital safety measure which is already in place across the whole SRS in Scotland and is due to be implemented in Wales during 2022.

6. Leasehold Sector

Similarly, unlike the PRS, there are no legal requirements for leaseholders to ensure the electrical safety of their properties. The amendment would rectify this. Leaseholders in HRRBs who failed to comply would receive a warning which, if ignored, could be followed up by a civil penalty. The amendment does not create a criminal offence.

Electrical Safety First considers this to be a proportionate and effective route towards ensuring that every resident in any HRRB is protected by a universal electrical safety inspection and testing regime, and we strongly urge all MPs to support these amendments.

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⁵ <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media/mtllsfls/social-rented-sector-policy-paper-march-2021.pdf#:~:text=Electrical Safety First's primary commitment is to ensure in the Social Rented Sector %28SRS%29 in England.>