Safety for Students

Guidance Notes on
Student Health and Safety
in Halls of Residence and
Self-Catering Accommodation

Safety Services Office
INTRODUCTION

This booklet has several objectives. It informs you as a student in University of Leicester accommodation that you, as well as the University and management, have responsibilities for safety.

People seldom think about safety except in connection with dangerous sports or crime; in fact, many thousands more are hurt - sometimes very badly hurt - in accidents in the home where most people feel safest. Whilst you occupy University accommodation, whether in a Hall of Residence, or in self-catering accommodation, that is your home for the time being. You have a duty not only to yourself, but also to others, who might be affected by what you do or don't do, to act safely and avoid injury and risks to health.

This booklet sets out a common-sense guide to health and safety for students in University accommodation, and the hope and expectation is that complying with its straightforward advice will help you to avoid accidents and injuries.

If you have any queries about the contents of this booklet, or on any other aspect of health and safety, help and advice are available from your Manager, Hall Warden or Sub-Warden, from the Self-Catering Accommodation management, or from the Safety Services Office by telephoning (0116) 2522426 (Internal 2426).

SAFETY FOR STUDENTS

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IMPORTANT - Fire Action

All University buildings have built in Fire Safety systems of high standards that alert you to a real or potential fire, protect you from its effects and enable you to make your way to a place of safety.

You have a responsibility to cooperate and act IMMEDIATELY when you hear the fire alarm.

IF YOU HEAR THE FIRE ALARM

Leave the building by the nearest available exit

Close doors in the vicinity and evacuate the building

If it is practicable and safe to do so switch off equipment

Go to the Assembly Point and await instructions from Staff.

DO NOT
- Stop to collect personal belongings
- Use the lift – unless authorised to do so
- Re-enter the building for any reason unless authorised to do so

FIRE NOTICES

Fire notices are posted throughout all buildings informing you of what to do in case of fire. Make sure that you are familiar with the arrangements in your building(s)

IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE

Sound the alarm by breaking the glass in the nearest fire alarm call point

Call the Fire Service - Dial 888; 999 or 222
(check the Fire action notice in the building)

Tackle the fire only if you are trained and it is safe to do so – do not take risks

Make your way to the Assembly Point and await instructions from Staff.

REMEMBER YOUR RESPONSIBILITY WHEN THE FIRE ALARM SOUNDS – COOPERATE AND EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY
University accommodation is fitted with modern fire detection systems to provide the highest level of life safety. However, the fire detectors are SENSITIVE and susceptible to unwanted false alarms, caused by smoke from burning food, steam from kettles, aerosol sprays etc therefore cooking should never be left unattended.

- **Fire extinguishers**

Fire extinguishers and fire blankets are provided in kitchens. Fire extinguishers are also provided in common areas. They should only be used on small fires and only if you have read and understood the instructions. Remember that the University does not expect you to take risks dealing with fires in its property. It can sometimes be better to just leave the area, raise the alarm and call the Fire Service.

![Fire extinguisher icon]

Fire extinguishers are RED, but have a coloured band to indicate the type of fire they are designed to fight. There are two types mainly used throughout the University.

**CREAM BAND**  
Contain foam and are used to smother fires. These can be used on fires that involve combinations of paper, wood, textiles, oils and fats. However, when intending to use a foam extinguisher near electricity you should cut off the power first.

**BLACK BAND**  
Contain carbon dioxide and are most effective on fires involving live electrical apparatus. The gas is not toxic, but it is an asphyxiant and CO₂ extinguishers must not be used in small confined spaces such as vehicles, store cupboards and the like.

- **Fire blankets:**

These can be used to smother fires in frying pans, cover small appliances that are on fire and wrap around people whose clothing is burning.

Once you have used the blanket for whatever purpose, **DO NOT REMOVE IT** until you are sure it is safe to do so. If you have wrapped it around someone, leave it there for skilled medical people to remove.

**Remember, the golden rule is:**

**GET OUT, CALL THE FIRE BRIGADE OUT, AND STAY OUT!**

(Property can be replaced - People can't.)
• Misuse of fire safety equipment

IT IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE TO MISUSE ANY FIRE SAFETY EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING EXTINGUISHERS, ALARMS AND FIRE BLANKETS.
Students caught doing so will be subject to disciplinary procedures, may be reported to the police and will in any case forfeit their place in University accommodation.

Please take this warning to heart. Students have been successfully prosecuted and left University with a criminal record.

• Fire drills

Fire drills are held regularly. Their objective is to familiarise you with the routine to be followed in the event of fire. Treat them seriously, because there may be a real fire.

Check how to get out and identify a safe alternative route should your normal exit be blocked. Check the location of fire alarms, fire extinguishers and fire blankets.

Check the sound of the fire alarm in your accommodation. On hearing the alarm, leave the building immediately using the nearest available route. Do not assume that it is a false alarm or test. If there is a fire, time spent talking might reduce your chances of evacuation safely.

GET OUT, CALL THE FIRE BRIGADE OUT, AND STAY OUT!

Do not interfere with fire doors by holding or wedging them open. When properly closed, fire doors will hold back smoke and gases and provide you with a means of escape.

• Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all University Buildings and University allocated accommodation.

If you smoke outside make sure you extinguish your cigarette and do not smoke in areas where there are combustible items.
• **Open flames**

Tea-lights and candles have become very popular. However, they provide a direct source of ignition for fires. They are not only a danger to you in your room but also to other people living in the accommodation. Fire caused by tea-lights and candles are entirely avoidable and the University **prohibits** their use. Below are photographs taken at University of Leicester student accommodation after a fire caused by an unattended tea-light:

![Photographs of fire damage caused by unattended tea-light](image)

2. **ELECTRICAL SAFETY**

**Electrically-powered equipment** manufactured to normal commercial standards and in good condition should not present any electrical danger as all dangerous parts should be fully enclosed. Students are strictly forbidden to carry out any work which might give rise to the danger of electrocution. This includes, for example, attempting to repair/adjust electrical appliances and connecting defective or dangerous appliances to the mains. All electrical work **must** be carried out by competent persons, i.e. qualified electricians employed by the University Estates Office or suitable contractors.

The use of heaters, and especially radiant electrical heaters, is strictly forbidden. They have been the cause of life-threatening fires and students contravening this prohibition can expect severe penalties.

**Electrical socket outlets** in study bedrooms and elsewhere are to be used to supply one appliance. The use of extension leads and multi-way adaptors can lead to overloading of the electrical systems, which may trip overload protection devices (fuses, circuit breakers, etc) or even cause a fire. These devices should only be used after consulting the Warden.

Overseas students wishing to use portable appliances operating on voltages other than the British national standard of **230 volts** (alternating current) should consult the University Accommodation Office or Hall Management. Operating appliances designed for use on voltages other than 230 V can cause fires when connected to the University mains supply.

Small electrical cooking appliances such as toasters, kettles and microwaves, etc may only be connected to the mains in kitchens.
The use of electrical appliances in socket outlets in corridors is strictly prohibited other than for equipment used by cleaning staff.

Equipment **must not be plugged into light bulb sockets**, or connected to systems intended solely for lighting purposes. In general, desk lamps ought not to be fitted with bulbs exceeding 40 watts. The lamp should always be switched off when changing bulbs.

**Important note:** The responsibility for the safety of **personal electrical equipment** rests with the owner. Students using their own electrical appliances should regularly check for defects, and in particular look for:

- Broken plugs
- Frayed, chafed, cracked or split supply cables
- Signs of overheating, eg. scorch marks, blackening or blistering
- Dangerous connections at the appliance and plug ends of the cable. Cable grips should hold both the outer and inner sheathing securely.
- Rattling or other looseness in the plug or appliance which might indicate an internal fault.

**Safety checks of students' own electrical appliances** will be carried out. This service is offered free-of-charge by Residential Services. Any repairs found necessary will be made and an appropriate charge levied.

**Entertainment:** Special arrangements must be made for electrical safety in the provision of power supplies for lighting, instruments etc. In all cases, the standards of electrical safety must conform to those set down in **Electrical Safety for Entertainers** Ref. INDG 247 published by the Health and Safety Executive (**http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg247.pdf**) and available from the Safety Office (Internal Tel: 2426 or External (0116) 2522426).

Organisers of events should be aware that acceptable standards of electrical safety are a condition of any licence granted for that event. Failure to comply with standards as set down may result in the revocation of the licence, refusal of future licences and prosecution.

### 3. **KITCHEN SAFETY**

Kitchens contain all the elements needed for a fire - fuel, air and ignition sources. If the kitchen gets hot and smelly from cooking, open the window **not the door**. Leaving cooking unattended **WILL** lead to fires. Photographs below are from separate fire incidents reported at University of Leicester student accommodation.
Burns and scalds
Scalds can be caused by steam, hot water, hot soup or beverages, or hot oil, and burn injuries can be caused by hot utensils, flames, etc. To avoid these injuries:
- Lift lids off cooking utensils carefully to avoid the steam
- Turn pan handles away from you when cooking, to avoid knocking them
- Turn off the oven before going out, answering phone calls or attending to visitors
- Do not directly hold utensils containing hot liquids – use oven mitts

Deep fat/oil frying
The most common cause of fires and injuries - particularly in self-catering accommodation - is cooking chips and other deep fat frying. The use of deep fat fryers/chip pans is prohibited.

Microwave ovens
- Keep them clean so that they work effectively.
- Keep door seals clean by wiping frequently with a soft, damp cloth and, if necessary, by cleaning out food particles. Never use a sharp pointed knife or similar. This will ruin the seal.
- Keep metal out of the microwave. Some metal items are specifically designed for microwave use. However, if in doubt, do not put metal into
the microwave - even the gold line on a piece of crockery will cause sparking and damage.

- **Beware all kinds of closed containers.** Bottles, jars, strong cartons - even eggs - will explode if subjected to microwave radiation. Open containers fully and remove caps and closures from bottles and jars. (Do not simply loosen them; the contents can expand into the neck, seal it and then dry quickly to create a closed container).

- **Do not run a microwave cooker without a load (something to be heated).** This may damage the cooker.

- **Beware of superheating.** Superheating is the phenomenon in which a liquid is heated to a temperature higher than its boiling point, without boiling. However, once the liquid is disturbed (by stirring, jolting the container or adding a further substance) some of it violently flashes to steam, spraying boiling water out of the container.

- **Foods and implements**
  - Keep knives used for food preparation sharp. Dull knives are very much harder to use and are liable to slip and cut you.
  - Never cut towards you when using a knife or other sharp implement.
  - Keep knives separate from other washing up. Groping around in murky washing-up water is a recipe for lacerated fingers. Clean sharp knives one at a time using a brush or mop, and wiping from handle to blade tip with the back of the blade facing into the web between thumb and forefinger.
  - If a knife falls - let it!
  - Use a good quality opener for canned foods, one that does not leave sharp edges on the lid.

- **Utensils**
  - Discard chipped and cracked glass and crockery by wrapping in thick layers of newspaper and putting in an outside bin.
  - Wash glasses separately, to prevent breakages and cut fingers. If you break a glass, use a brush to gather up the pieces - never your hands.
  - Search the kitchen carefully for bits when a glass is broken. Glass fragments fly in all directions, and are often discovered later (by bare feet!).

4. **FOOD HYGIENE**

Germs are widespread. Most surfaces (including human skin) have their population of microorganisms. Whist most microorganisms are harmless, some can cause sickness either by infection, or by producing toxins when growing in food materials. For this reason, perishable foodstuff should be stored in the refrigerator, as low temperatures slow down microorganism growth. Cooking destroys microorganisms, however it is necessary to cook food for long enough to raise the temperature adequately throughout the food.
If food is left at warm temperatures bacteria build up and produce toxins. Subsequent cooking may destroy bacteria but may not destroy all toxins.

Germs are killed at high temperatures and are slowed down by refrigeration. The best ways of avoiding food contamination and food poisoning are to:

- Keep food frozen or refrigerated.
- Do not keep food longer than recommended.
- Discard any 'doubtful' food.
- Do not store fresh food (intended to be cooked) with pre-cooked food (which is to be eaten as it is). Any germs in the fresh food can be transferred to the pre-cooked food.
- Cook food thoroughly. Outer food colour is NOT a reliable indicator of an adequate internal temperature.
- Take special care when using leftovers. Cook thoroughly.
- Do not sneeze, cough or touch your mouth or face when handling food.
- Keep pans, kitchen tools, glass, crockery, fridges and food storage areas clean. Food scraps, crumbs and open containers encourage vermin that carry disease.
- Wash your hands often when handling food (and always after using the toilet). Keep towels, tea-towels and washcloths clean and dry them quickly (and safely - not near an open flame). A warm, damp cloth that has been used to wipe food from hands is an ideal breeding ground for germs.
- Avoid handling food if you have an injury or a skin condition. Cover cuts with a clean, waterproof adhesive dressing.

5. DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES

Many substances used domestically are dangerous if not used with care. Only use substances for the purpose for which they are supplied.

Before using any substances, check the directions for health and safety information and follow them carefully. Be particularly wary when using products marked as follows:

These will damage human tissue, causing painful and disfiguring burns. Protect your skin with a pair of good quality rubber or plastic gloves and keep arms covered. If in contact with eyes or skin wash off with lots of water immediately. If ingested seek immediate medical attention.

Eyes are particularly vulnerable. If in contact with eyes or skin wash off with lots of water immediately. If ingested seek immediate medical attention. You can gain better protection by wearing gloves and eye protection.
Most household substances - **bleach, scouring powder, toilet cleaners, disinfectants, detergents etc.** - are designed to dissolve grease, remove stains or shift things like burnt-on fat. It follows that they will damage you if used carelessly and without adequate personal protection.

Take extra care with things such as **aerosol cans of oven cleaner**. Sprayed into the corner of an oven, the spray can fly back into your face and eyes and is highly corrosive. Wipe-on types of oven cleaner are safer.

**NEVER MIX HOUSEHOLD SUBSTANCES.** They are designed to work on their own, and mixing can result in danger.

Be especially wary of substances designed to unblock drains. If a drain is blocked contact your Manager, Hall Warden or Sub-Warden. Do not attempt to unblock it yourself.

6. **DOMESTIC HAZARDS**

Many more accidents happen at home than at work. A simple safety routine, and attention to a few basic rules, can reduce the risk of accidents and injuries.

Think carefully when **storing** things. **Do not** put heavy objects on high shelves if you can avoid it. They are more difficult to put up and take down, and if they fall, they are liable to inflict more serious injury.

Load free-standing shelves and **bookcases** with care, to avoid top-heaviness and overturning.

Take great care with **medicines**. Students under medical supervision and taking regular doses of tablets or medicines should ensure these are kept in a secure place to reduce the risk of theft and misuse by others. **DO NOT** transfer drugs and medicines to other – especially unmarked containers.

The same is true of all kinds of drinks. The history of accident prevention is littered with stories of bleach in lemonade bottles, (bright red) brake fluid in a cherryade bottle, and paint stripper in a container originally designed for shampoo.

The most common accident is often the most preventable – **SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS**

- Being surrounded by **clutter** gives rise to the danger of slipping, tripping and falling.
- **Rugs and mats** on smooth floors are dangerous. If you must have them, fix some wide double-sided sticky tape to the back to stop them slipping.
• Keep **trailing electrical leads** to a minimum and out of your way, as you move about. Apart from the obvious danger of tripping over, and cables being pulled out of plugs, snagging cables can easily result in damage to expensive electrical appliances.

• **Danger of falls.** Occasionally, reports are received of students risking their lives by climbing on to roofs, down the outsides of buildings, or sitting in window openings, sometimes many feet above the ground.
  - **DO NOT CLIMB OR SCALE BUILDINGS**
  - **DO NOT SIT IN WINDOW OPENINGS OR ON WINDOW LEDGES**

• **'Safe means of access'** is a familiar phrase in accident prevention at work, where a range of access equipment - steps, stools, ladders and scaffolds, is available. In the domestic situation, the *appropriate equipment* should be used where available. A chair as a safe means of access is not recommended, but if it is the only option, and where it is safe to do so, then choose one with a rigid seat (not a loose fragile upholstered one) and with sturdy, well-spaced legs. **Do not** stand on a swivel chair.

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