

Information for Tenants

Leaflet No. 4
(Issue May 2011)

Arcon expects you to maintain your property to the standard it was let to you. There are precautions you can take to minimise problems and make sure your home is maintained, safe and secure.

Maintaining your property

Dampness and Condensation

Many of the complaints we receive are about dampness. It can cause problems and can be difficult to cure. However, dampness is made worse by condensation which can be controlled or minimized by you. Condensation occurs when moisture in the air comes into contact with a colder surface. Condensation can lead to mould growth on decorations, clothing and furniture.

Where does all the moisture come from?

Just breathing gives off moisture. For example, when you sleep at night you will produce half a litre of moisture. Cooking gives off steam and a gas cooker will produce one litre of moisture per hour by being used. Bathing, laundry and wet outdoor clothing are often major sources of water vapour in the home. Even indoor plants can be a large source of water vapour.

What can you do to reduce condensation?

Condensation can be reduced by controlling sources of moisture.

If you find that your windows are full of condensation in the morning, then you should wipe them down with a cloth. Wring the water out of the cloth direct into the sink and avoid drying the cloth on a radiator. If you do not wipe the windows, the moisture will pool and be absorbed back into the atmosphere and the problem will continue.

Cover pots and pans while cooking and do not leave a kettle boiling. When cooking, use the extractor fan, if one is fitted, or open a window. Keep the kitchen door closed while cooking and for an hour after.

Put clothes washing outdoors to dry if you can or put it in the bathroom with the door closed. You may find it useful to buy a rack which fits over the bath and allows the clothes to drip dry into the bath. It will help the situation if the bathroom fan is switched on or the window is left open while the clothes are drying. If you have a tumble dryer make sure it is vented properly to the outside (unless it is the self condensing type).

Dry clothing left out in a room can absorb moisture from the atmosphere, so you should store clothing in a wardrobe. Avoid open freestanding rails that do not have any form of cover. Leather is particularly prone to mould attack if it is left exposed to high moisture levels. Never put shoes, bags or jackets away wet, allow to dry before placing them in a store or wardrobe. If your home suffers from a lot of condensation you should check leather products regularly to avoid them being ruined.

Use your heating system to keep some background heating within the property—this will keep the atmosphere warmer and help keep moisture from condensing and so reduce your condensation problems.

Some ventilation is needed to get rid of moisture being produced all the time, including that from people's breath. Keep a small window ajar when someone is in the room or if you have trickle vents on the windows, leave them in the open position.

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Air bricks are fitted in a number of walls which are often an essential requirement for gas appliances and also help reduce condensation. These air bricks should not be blocked up or sealed.

If you continue to have problems with condensation, after following the advice above, please contact the Maintenance Department who will arrange for an inspection to be carried out.

Damp

Rising damp will only be found in ground floor rooms and usually leaves stain marks above the skirting. Penetration damp can occur on any outside wall and generally appears in patches that can gradually increase in size. If you find either of these problems in your home please contact the Maintenance Department who will arrange to undertake a survey.

Blocked Waste Pipes

Blocked waste pipes occur most commonly in kitchens and bathrooms when either food particles or hair builds up in the U-bend. To avoid this remove food or hair from around the plug hole after using sinks or baths. If you are unable to remove the blockage with a plunger, carefully unscrew the lower part of the U-bend, remove blockage and screw pipework back into place.

Household Pests

Tenants are responsible for dealing with minor household pests such as ants, slugs, wasps, bees etc.

More serious pest or vermin problems should be referred to the Environmental Health Department of your local authority.

Gas Safety

If you think you can smell Gas:

- **Don't** turn electrical switches on or off.
- **Don't** smoke.
- **Don't** use naked flames.
- **Do** turn off the gas supply at the meter.
- **Do** open doors and windows to get rid of the gas.
- **Call** National Grid UK (formerly TransCo) on 0800 111 999.

Electricity:

To avoid any incidents with electrical sockets or appliances:

- Ensure appliances are wired correctly.
- Do not overload any plug sockets.
- Remove plugs from sockets when you go to bed and if you go out.



Checking and Changing electrical fuses?

As you should be aware from the tenant's handbook, replacing electrical fuses is the tenant's responsibility. A light or power circuit's fuse can blow due to any number of reasons. A light bulb that fails, or an appliance that has a fault could cause the fuse to blow. This will require you to reset the fuse within the consumer unit. You should have one of the following fuses within the consumer unit.

Standard fuse: This contains a length of fuse wire held in position by two screws. You will need a torch, screwdriver with insulated handle and some fuse wire to repair the fix the fuse. To check the fuse you should **switch off the consumer unit main switch**. You will not have the use of the lighting once you have switched off the electrics and will need a torch to continue.



Remove the fuse to check if the fuse wire has broken or burnt out and replace with fuse wire of the same rating. The fuse rating is identified on the fuse itself along with a colour. For example the photograph shows a 5 amp fuse, which always has white spots. The other two common fuses are blue spots indicate 15 amp and red spots which is 30 amp. There are other ratings and colours and if you have these you should use the appropriate fuse wire.



To replace the wire, undo the two screws and remove the old wire. Feed new fuse wire through the center of the fuse and wind around the screws before tightening. Cut off any excess wire before replacing fuse back in consumer unit. Switch electrics back on completion.

A card of fuse wire should cost you no more than a pound. If you are not sure which one to use, take the old fuse with you to your local hardware or DIY shop.

Don't forget that while the electricity is off your freezer can begin to defrost and you may need to reset clocks.



Cartridge fuse: These are similar to the above but in place of wire there is a fuse, similar to that those found in plugs but slightly bigger. Buy a new fuse with the right fuse rating; they cost a couple of pound each.



Modern fuse: This fuse will turn itself off if a circuit becomes overloaded. To reset this type of fuse you only need to push the switch back up to the on position.

Should the fuse trip again immediately after resetting, try to identify the source of the problem. If it's the lighting that is going out and it happens when you switch on a certain light fitting then replace the bulb and try again. If the problem is on the power circuit it could be due to a fault on one of your appliances. Irons, toasters, kettles and washing machines are often the source of the problem. Unfortunately it is often a process of elimination where you will need to plug in an item to see if it causes the fuse to trip.



If the problem persists after you have carried out the above, then contact the Maintenance Department and explain the situation to them. Remember you could be recharged if an electrician is set to rectify a fault which turn out to be caused by one of your appliances.



Fire

Avoiding any electrical faults will help to prevent fire, it is also a good idea:

- Not to leave chip pans unattended. If a pan catches fire, cover with a damp cloth. (Accidents while cooking account for 59% of fires in the home)
- Not to use paraffin heaters.
- Not to remove closing mechanisms from doors or prop them open. This will help to prevent the spread of fire.
- Not to remove internal fire doors.
- Check smoke alarms regularly.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.
- Ensure cigarettes are stubbed out and disposed of carefully.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Keep matches and lighters away from children.
- Keep clothing away from heating appliances.

In the event of a fire, close the door of the room where the fire has started and make sure that you and all your family exit the property. Call out the Fire Brigade and do not re-enter the property.

If you find you are trapped in a room try and cover any gaps around the edges of doors and open the window.

Frost precautions:

In times of harsh weather there can be problems with burst pipes. A few precautions in the winter period may help to prevent this from happening:

- Try and keep your property warm at all times.
- Locate your stop tap and know how to turn it off.
- Do not leave taps running or dripping.
- If your overflow is leaking it can freeze in cold weather which can result in flooding. Therefore you must report a leaking overflow immediately in the winter time.

If your pipes do freeze, try and thaw them out with a hot water bottle, electric fan heater or a hairdryer. **Never** use a naked flame.

If you have a burst:

- Turn off the main stop tap.
- Turn on all your taps to drain off the water.
- Turn off central heating or immersion heater.
- Try and find out where the water is coming from and inform the contractors when they arrive.

To prevent any extensive damage report the leak immediately to the Association. Any damage to furniture or decorations should be covered by your household contents insurance.

Security

Always make sure your property is secure when you go out:

- Always close and lock windows and doors.
- Never leave keys under the mat.
- If any strangers call to your property, ask to see their identity cards.

It is a good idea to fit an alarm system for added security.

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