

C

Living in Service Family Accommodation



December 2009

Living in SFA

Repairs

Your Housing Provider will keep in good repair the structure, exterior and common parts of your home, together with any installations provided by them to heat the home, provide water and sanitation (including basins, sinks, baths, showers and toilets), and for the supply of oil, gas, water and electricity.

Reporting Repairs - Please report faults promptly by contacting the Helpdesk on the number(s) given in Booklet F and give:

- Your name
- Your address
- Your daytime telephone number
- Details of the repair that is needed
- Access arrangements

Further details of the local Repair Response Procedure for your home can be found in Booklet F. It contains current response times for the local area in which you live, that may differ to those given below. There is an intention to standardise all response timings to those given below when contracts and operating agreements are renegotiated in the future.

Despite some minor variations in local procedures, repairs fall into 3 categories, Emergency, Urgent and Routine and are generally defined as follows:

Emergency - These are problems that could pose imminent risk of injury, extensive damage to your home or its environment, or give rise to severe inconvenience or hardship. If the defect is complicated it will be made safe until a permanent repair can be arranged. Emergencies include:

- Total loss of electrical power or light
- Loss of gas supply

- Loss of heating in cold weather (31 Oct to 01 May) with no other heating available, especially where children or elderly people are affected
- Loss of water heating
- Blockage of your only toilet
- Burst pipes or taps that will not turn off
- Severe roof leaks
- Total loss of cooking facilities
- Inability to secure the property

The contractor will arrive on site within 3 hours of being notified and complete the make-safe process within 24 hours. Subsequent response and rectification, temporary or permanent, is in accordance with Urgent and Routine maintenance procedures.

Urgent - These are defects that may cause either serious discomfort to you, or may lead to serious damage to your home or fittings. They include:

- Substantial loss of electrical power or light
- Faults to power, lighting or electrical sockets
- Loss, or partial loss, of central or water heating during winter months (31 Oct to 01 May)
- Toilet blocked or not flushing where you have more than one toilet
- Leaking pipes, tank or cistern (containable leaks)
- Loss of oven functionality

The repair will be carried out within 5 working days following notification.

Routine - The majority of defects fall into this category. They include minor problems such as:

- Bathroom or toilet fittings
- Doors or windows sticking
- Plaster repairs and brickwork
- One broken cooker ring
- Other non-urgent internal and external repairs

The repair will be carried out within 20 working days following notification.

The performance of the contractors responsible for carrying out the repairs is monitored and reported back to the Defence Housing Joint Customer Board.

Private Finance Initiative - Where the property was built and leased under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in UK different arrangements may apply. Further details may be found in the UK Booklet F.

Access - You must let the Housing Providers' staff or their contractors, into your home to inspect it or to carry out repairs. Other than in an emergency, you should be given 48 hours notice of such a visit. Where an emergency repair is required immediate access should be given. You should always ask for identification if anyone calls. If you are not sure who they are, contact the MHS Help Desk (England & Wales), or RPC Help Desk (Scotland), the approved contractor's Helpdesk (Northern Ireland) or the Housing Provider's office (Overseas) for advice.

Your Responsibilities - You are responsible for keeping your home in a reasonable condition during occupation and in particular for:

- Changing domestic fuses and light bulbs
- Maintaining the standard of the garden to a neat and tidy condition
- Taking precautions to prevent damage to the SFA by fire, frost, the bursting of water pipes and the blocking of drains
- Clearing any sink or bath blockages
- Routine testing and cleaning of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms
- Resetting of electrical trip switches due to faulty bulbs
- Ensuring that all repairs are reported as they occur

Re-Chargeable Repairs in UK - Apart from normal wear and tear, if you or any other member of your household damages, even accidentally, any fixtures and fittings, or any part of your home, you are liable for the costs of repair. Examples are:

- Blockages in toilets and waste pipes
- Repairs to locks or doors due to lost or stolen keys
- Broken glass in windows
- Damage to worktops (burns etc)
- Reinstatement of the garden due to neglect
- Running out of heating oil

If you cannot carry out the work yourself, or if the Housing Provider does it for you, ie in an emergency, it will be called a 'chargeable repair' and you will be sent a bill for the cost of carrying out the work. You might wish to give serious consideration to arranging insurance to protect yourself from a large bill following damage that falls outside the normal definition of fair wear and tear or 'Act of God'. Please note that the licensee may still be liable for costs even if uninsured or the damage exceeds the level of the insurance cover.

Chargeable Repairs Overseas - Pending amendment to the LTO you will only be held liable for the costs of damage/repairs if you, your family, visitors or pets have acted negligently. Your LTO gives the definitive position.

Health and Safety - You must not store bottled gas, paraffin, (except where it is the sole source of heating/cooking overseas) petrol or any other toxic or dangerous goods or substances in your home, garage or store. You are also reminded that it is normally an offence to pour paint, oil, petrol or chemical substances into the drains. Litter should not be left lying around and remember that broken glass is dangerous.

Refuse/Recycling - You must dispose of all your household rubbish in accordance with local procedures. Please note and comply with any local regulations regarding recycling.

Estate Management

Carpets and Curtains - Carpets will normally be cleaned at public expense every 3 years for lounge/dining rooms/hallway and stairs and every 5 years for bedrooms. Carpets are expected to have a life cycle of 10 years. Where variation to these time frames exist at overseas locations please see Booklet F for details. Curtains have a minimum allotted life span of 8 years and will be cleaned at public expense on change of occupancy or at 3 yearly intervals.

To arrange for carpet or curtain cleaning, in UK contact the HPC/RPC/approved contractor, overseas contact your Housing Provider.

Change of Circumstances - You must advise your HIC in writing of any change of circumstance that could affect your entitlement. We will reassess your entitlement if:

- You are promoted
- Your PStatCat changes
- The size of your family changes
- You are posted to a new unit (unless you serve in the RN or RM and live within a Port area as defined in JSP 464)
- You leave the Services

Decoration - Internal walls in SFA are decorated in magnolia (and perhaps white if overseas). You may choose to paint the internal walls of your SFA in other colours during your period of occupancy, with the prior written consent of the Housing Provider, but the walls must be repainted to the normal standard prior to Move-Out. SFA is due redecoration every 4 years.

Frost Precautions - During the winter months you should take all reasonable precautions to prevent damage caused by adverse weather conditions. You may be charged for damages/repairs caused by flooding if you do not take precautions to keep the pipes/tank frost free.

Furniture Services - Defence Accommodation Stores (DAS) are responsible for providing the furniture requirements that you request on your application form (MOD Form 1132) for SFA. There are three levels of furnishing from which to choose. Unfurnished; which includes carpets, curtains, cooker; Part Furnished and Fully Furnished. You have the opportunity, once during your occupation of SFA, to return furniture that is no longer required. To do so, please contact your local provider.

Garages and Car Ports - If you require a garage, the HIC/local Housing Provider will try and allocate you one with your original application. If, however, there is no garage tied to the property we will aim to provide a separate garage. If you require a garage you should indicate this when submitting your MOD Form 1132.

Gardens - Whilst in occupation of SFA, it is your responsibility to maintain the garden in a tidy condition including cutting the grass, hedge cutting (up to 1.8m), maintaining the flowerbeds and shrubs, the collection of leaves and disposal of garden refuse. You are not, however, responsible for the maintenance of trees within the confines of the property. In the UK, contact your HPC/RPC/approved contractor (and overseas contact your Housing Provider) to attend to trees, or hedges over 1.8m high. Work is not carried out between March and September due to bird nesting.

Leaving Your Home Temporarily - There may be times when you and your family need to leave your home for a period in excess of 3 weeks. If this is the case, it is important that you give the following details to the staff at your HIC/local Housing Provider or Unit Welfare Office in case we need to contact you in an emergency:

- How long you will be away
- The date you will be returning
- Where your keys are
- How you or your family can be contacted while you are away

Storage Facilities - Occupants are not permitted to use the loft space in SFA for storage. Secure garages can however be used for this purpose. Care should be taken to ensure that all items stored in the garage are safe and suitable for such storage. No inflammable materials should be stored in the garage. You are reminded that private vehicles and/or personal effects are stored in the garage at your sole risk and the department and/or its agents will not accept any liability for loss or damage to such property. You should ensure your contents insurance provides adequate cover.

Safety in the Home

The following safety precautions are not exhaustive and you will need to apply a common sense approach to safety in the home.

Fire - What To Do If There Is A Fire - If there is a fire in your home, leave the room straight away and close the door. Don't try to put the fire out unless you can do so quickly and safely. Tell everyone who is at home and get them to leave the property, closing all doors behind them, as this will slow down the spread of fire and reduce the spread of smoke. Be aware that smoke is the main danger in most fires. Leave the building where the fire is and then call the fire brigade, dialling **999** (or the local equivalent overseas), give the telephone number you are calling from and ask for the fire brigade. Give your name and address and say where the fire is. Wait until the fire brigade has repeated the address. Inform occupants of adjoining houses / flats that they should evacuate immediately.

To reduce the risk of fire in your home:

- Make sure that all fires are guarded
- Make sure that cigarettes are put out properly
- Keep matches out of reach and sight of children
- Never leave a chip pan unattended
- Do not tamper with the self-closing mechanism of any door or wedge the door(s) open
- Switch off and remove electrical plugs

Smoke Detectors - All SFA, SSFA and hirings are fitted with smoke detectors. Battery powered detectors are being replaced by mains operated detectors with battery back-up so that the detector will still sound in the event of mains electrical failure. You should press the test button on the detector monthly to ensure the detector is working. The warning signal sounds every 45 seconds for up to 30 days when the battery needs replacing. Failure to do so could cost lives.

Electrical Safety - Always make sure that electrical appliances carry the label of the British Electrical Approval Board (BEAB) guarantee of safety sign.

- Make sure the plugs are wired correctly and that fuses are working
- Do not have too many items plugged into one socket
- Check flexes and fittings regularly for loose, worn or damaged parts or loose connections
- Never touch plugs, switches or electrical equipment if you have wet hands
- Never use portable electrical equipment in the bathroom (except shavers with a special shaver socket).

Gas - If you smell gas:

- Do not strike a match or use naked flames
- Put out cigarettes, cigars and so on
- Avoid using electrical switches
- Open doors and windows to let the gas escape
- Turn off the supply at the meter
- Evacuate everybody from the property and telephone the number given in Booklet F. (The National Grid Gas Emergency Telephone Number 0800 111999 in the UK)

Gas Safety - Under no circumstances deliberately block or cover airbricks in external walls which are provided for both ventilation and combustion purposes.

By UK Law, all gas appliances are to be inspected every 12 months by a Gas Safe registered engineer. Your co-operation is required in allowing access to contractors for this purpose. Up to two appointments will be made but if access is denied and the Housing Provider's contractors are unable to meet our statutory obligations then legal action may be taken to gain entry to the property.

Security

How You Can Avoid Being Burgled - Burglaries cause a great deal of distress, even if nothing valuable is stolen. Most burglaries are carried out on the spur of the moment. Do not make it easy for burglars.

- Never leave your home without making sure that the windows are secured and the doors are locked
- At night leave a light on in one room (not the hall) and draw the curtains
- Leave a key with a trusted neighbour in case an emergency occurs
- When on holiday, cancel newspaper and milk deliveries. It is a good idea to give your holiday address to a trusted neighbour

Temporary Absence - Where possible you should leave a key with a neighbour in order that your SFA can be accessed in an emergency. It is also advisable to inform the local (military/MDP/civil) police of your absence.

Insurance - You are strongly advised to arrange insurance for your potential liability to us - Defence Estates or the Housing Provider, your personal property and that of any Spouse/Civil Partner or child, or for your liability to 3rd parties in respect of injury to them and damage to their property. You need to be aware that there is no predetermined limit on your potential liability for the cost of repairing damage to your SFA and you should arrange insurance cover for an appropriate sum based on your personal circumstances. However, be aware that if you are not adequately insured you may still be pursued by the MOD for your liabilities for any damage caused to a property.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Unacceptable Behaviour - In accordance with the terms of your LTO, you, your family or visitors must not harass or cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours. Consider how any action you, your family, pets or visitors take, will impact on your neighbours. Please familiarise yourself with your LTO and the implications that breaching the licence through antisocial behaviour may have on your continued occupation of SFA.

You risk having the LTO withdrawn if you, or members of your family or your visitors, cause antisocial behaviour or commit hate crimes. We will investigate all incidents that are brought to our attention. This may result in us taking legal proceedings against you which could lead to eviction.

Antisocial Behaviour - Antisocial behaviour can exist in a variety of forms. It can be against a group or an individual. It is important to remember that the person causing the nuisance may not be aware that they are disturbing others. Examples are:

- Playing loud music
- Using DIY tools at antisocial hours
- Banging and slamming doors
- Allowing dogs to bark continuously
- Dumping rubbish

Neighbour Disputes - Noise and nuisance are the most common neighbour disputes. What can you do to prevent being a noisy neighbour or committing antisocial behaviour?

- Respect your neighbour's privacy and comfort
- Keep noise to acceptable levels, especially in summer when windows are open
- Do not leave your dog constantly barking at home or in the garden
- Inform your neighbours if you intend to hold a party
- Do not park your vehicle on pavements or a communal area where it might constitute a danger or obstruction

If you have a dispute with your neighbour you should, in the first instance, try and resolve it yourself. First contact your neighbour in a reasonable manner and ask for the nuisance to stop, explaining the impact that it is having on you. If this fails then the next step is to ask your Welfare Officer for advice or speak to your HIC/Housing office. It is advisable to keep a diary of events should there eventually be a need to take legal action.

Hate Crimes - A hate crime is behaviour that deliberately intends to harm or intimidate a person. It is often motivated by prejudice because of someone's race, colour, national origin, ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, disability or sexuality.

Harassment - You must not harass your neighbours, your neighbour's visitors or the Housing Providers' employees, including contractors, because of their race, colour, religion, gender, sexuality, age, disability or medical condition. Examples of this type of behaviour include:

- Verbal abuse
- Using an animal to threaten another person
- Using abusive, racist or insulting words or behaviour
- Threatening or abusive letters, phone calls or e-mails
- Physical assaults or damage to property, including graffiti
- Doing anything that interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of other people

You can contact the Environmental Officer in the UK if you have a noisy neighbour or the police if you believe that a criminal offence is being committed.

Your HIC or local Housing office will also be available to provide you with advice and assistance.

If you are unable to resolve the dispute amicably and the situation persists we may take action to obtain an injunction or possession order if the crime justifies such action. We will also report any criminal act to the police.

Domestic Violence - Domestic Violence is considered to be any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are, or have been, in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or age. Although part of the women's aid campaign, the advice to 'ACT' is pertinent for both female and male victims of Domestic Violence:

- A Admit it is a problem
- C Call it by its name - Domestic Violence
- T Talk to Someone

National Domestic Violence Helpline, Tel: 0808 2000247
(Or via their website: www.womensaid.org.uk)

ManKind National Helpline, Tel: 0870 7944124
(Or via their website: www.mankind.org.uk)

Help is also available from the following organisations in the UK:
AWS, NPFS, SSAFA-FH, Unit Welfare Staff, CAB, your Doctor or Health Visitor and the Civil or Military Police.

Child Protection - Parents have a responsibility to protect their children and this includes not leaving them at risk of any significant harm. This needs to be considered especially in terms of leaving any children unattended, for whatever reason. If a child comes to any harm, or is perceived to be at risk of harm, while left unattended then the parent, or agreed adult carer, will face consequences and this may include prosecution.

Anyone having any concerns in relation to Child Protection and requiring any further information on this subject can phone the national free Child Protection Helpline Tel: 0800 022 3222 in the UK, or contact their local Social Work office or Police. Within the Services, advice can also be sought from Unit Welfare Officers or the Service Welfare Services.

Permissions

Pets/Animals - Your licence requires you to seek written permission before keeping a pet. Contact your HIC/Housing Provider and they will provide you with an application form.

We will not normally withhold permission, however we reserve the right to withdraw it at any time if we have good reason, for example, if your animal is causing a nuisance. We will not give you permission to keep any animal which is classified as being dangerous under The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Satellite Dishes and other Encroachments - Occupants will generally be permitted to carry out minor encroachments to the outside of their homes, eg satellite dish, TV aerial, erecting a greenhouse, garden shed, etc. providing prior written permission is sought from your HIC/Housing Provider. Encroachments will be inspected prior to Move-Out and you may be required to remove and make good. You will normally be responsible for the costs of any removal/remedial works incurred.

Parking, Caravans, Boats and Trailers - The parking of heavy goods vehicles, caravans and other large trailers is not permitted (although permission can be given for short periods whilst loading, and unloading) exceptionally, with prior written approval from the HIC/Housing Provider.

Parking facilities for occupants and visitors exist on most estates. Communal parking bays do not have designated parking rights for residents unless a family member is disabled.

You must not park on grass verges, open plan front gardens or where you may block access for emergency vehicles such as fire engines/ambulances. If you do you will be charged for the cost of making good damaged grass areas.

You must not carry out repairs to any vehicle on MOD land that could cause a nuisance or damage our property.

Running a Business from Home - The use of SFA for a business or commercial activity eg internet and home working, mail order catalogue, cosmetic representative, registered child minding etc is not generally prohibited but prior written permission must be sought from the HIC/Housing Provider and the LSC.

Business or commercial undertakings requiring installation of industrial machinery, storage of heavy, large, toxic or explosive materials, car repairs or constant visits to SFA by members of the public (eg surgery/advice services) are not permitted.

Storage of Firearms - All privately owned firearms and ammunition must be covered by a valid Firearms or Shotgun Certificate. Occupants of SFA are to store privately owned firearms in approved Service Armouries where possible. Where this is not possible, the storage of firearms and ammunition is permitted in SFA with prior written consent of the HIC/Housing Provider and in accordance with Part 7, Section 7, Chapter 3 of JSP 440.