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## Your home

Feeling good in your own house is a big deal for everyone. Above all, we want you to feel safe, comfortable and proud. There's advice here on things to do to help you feel like that. If you don't feel good, call to tell us why on Freephone 0800 479 7979.



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**In this section:**

- Home safety
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- Asbestos

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## Home safety

As a tenant you must take all reasonable precautions to prevent risks to yourself and to others. These risks include fire and explosions arising from the use or storage of any flammable or dangerous substances in and around your house.

### For example:

- Heaters fuelled by liquid petroleum gas (LPG) are not permitted in multi-storey flats
  - Bicycles and motorcycles must never be stored on stairwells
  - Rubbish should always be disposed of properly, using rubbish chutes, communal or individual wheelie bins where provided and never left on landings or within closes
  - Unattended rubbish can be a health hazard and may attract rodents, or could be a fire hazard if set alight by vandals.
- » We strongly recommend that you take out home contents insurance. You can access favourable rates as a GHA tenant. Call our insurance team on **Freephone 0800 027 3456**.

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## Making your home efficient

Our trained energy advisors can visit you at home and provide impartial energy advice and assistance that will help you:

- Cut down your energy use and keep you warm
- Help you get better deals on your fuel bills
- Assist you with debt arrangements to energy providers.

To arrange a free visit from an energy advisor, contact us on **Freephone 0800 479 7979** or arrange a visit through your housing officer.

### Want to know more?

Pick up our leaflet 'Your guide to saving energy' from any of our offices or call us on 0800 479 7979.

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## Gas safety checks

Everyone in your home should know what natural gas smells like. If you smell natural gas in your home:

- Make sure all gas appliances and the burners on your stove are turned completely off
- Put out any cigarettes
- Open all doors and windows
- Do not use matches or naked flames
- Turn gas off at the meter
- Do not operate any electrical switches or appliances including door entry systems
- Call **Transco** free on **0800 111 999** or call us on **Freephone 0800 479 7979**.

Remember by law you must allow us access to your home so we can carry out our annual gas safety check. The check protects you, your family and your neighbours.

**Want to know more?**  
Pick up our leaflet 'Your guide to repairs and maintenance' from any of our offices or call us on 0800 479 7979.

You can also find out more about this on page 36.

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## Bogus callers

Bogus callers can cause serious emotional and financial distress. To avoid this, please follow some simple rules:

- Always ask for proof of identification and check it carefully – it must have a photograph of the caller on it. Never be persuaded or bullied to let someone inside your home or worry about seeming rude. If in doubt – keep them out!
- If other people such as previous tenants still have a set of keys, change the locks.
- Never give keys to workmen or tradesmen unless you are certain you can trust them – copy keys are easily made.

If you receive a visit from a bogus caller or have any doubts about someone at your door, please call us **Freephone 0800 479 7979** immediately.

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## Asbestos

Asbestos is a material made up of strong fibres which are resistant to both heat and chemicals. These qualities made asbestos a popular material in the building trade and led to its use in a wide range of building products, including fireproofing. Asbestos is most likely to be found in homes built between the 1950s and early 1980s. Properties built since the mid 1980s are very unlikely to contain asbestos in the fabric of the building but may contain some traces in other areas. Properties built after 1990 are extremely unlikely to contain asbestos anywhere in the building. Asbestos has now been banned.

As long as it is not disturbed or broken, asbestos is not a danger.

Asbestos fibres can only be seen under a microscope. These fibres can penetrate deep into the lung and stay there. This can cause respiratory disease.

It is very unlikely that the levels of asbestos fibres found in buildings will be harmful, but if you have damaged asbestos materials in your home, you should contact your Local Housing Organisation (LHO) immediately.

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## Where you might find asbestos products

**Asbestos is found in a variety of products; some of the most common include:**

- Floor tiles
- Wall boards
- Artex (textured) ceiling finishes
- Some plaster finishes and wall boards
- Sprayed coatings to pipe work
- Lagging around pipe work and hot water cylinders
- Water tanks
- Lining boards on the back of boilers or service cupboard doors
- Inside electrical distribution boards and fuses
- Bath panels
- Internal window cill boards
- Corrugated cement roofing sheets (often found on garages and outhouses)
- Artificial slate roofs
- Gutters and rainwater pipes.

**Other common items from around the home, which may contain asbestos, are:**

- Ironing board heating pads
- Lining panels on the back of gas fires

Asbestos may also be found in other products. This list is only a guide to some of the most common types.

If the asbestos containing material is sealed (encapsulated) safely and is in good condition then it will not be a problem unless the sealant gets damaged. This is because asbestos is only dangerous when fibres can be released into the air.

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## Handle asbestos carefully

**If there are any asbestos products in your home it is important that you do not damage or disturb them in any way.** If you carry out DIY on asbestos products you are putting yourself in danger. It is important that you:

- Do not drill a hole through any asbestos boards
- Do not cut or break off any parts of asbestos products
- Do not rub down asbestos panels, or artex, with sandpaper
- Do not use wallpaper scrapers on asbestos products
- Do not remove asbestos panels to gain access to services

**Remember:** cutting asbestos with electrical tools or breaking asbestos products with a hammer is extremely dangerous and must be avoided.

If you are not sure whether a product contains asbestos it is safest not to do anything that may damage or disturb it. In any case you should always contact GHA for permission to carry out alterations to your home. We will then be able to tell you whether there is any asbestos in your home when we visit.

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## What are we doing about asbestos?

- We have an asbestos manager and a number of asbestos officers working to help you
- We have appointed Babcock Scientific Services as our accredited asbestos surveyors and they are carrying out a survey programme across all GHA properties
- Surveys will continue until all at-risk properties have been inspected. It is intended that initial surveys will be complete during 2009
- We aim to ensure that all materials containing asbestos are effectively managed and risk to our tenants is reduced to its lowest practical level.

Once a survey has been carried out we will know whether there are any materials that contain asbestos in your home and, if so, what condition they are in. If any are in a dangerous condition we will arrange for them to be encapsulated or removed as soon as possible. However any materials, which are not in a dangerous condition, will not always be removed. This is because it is very disruptive. We will therefore endeavour to do any required work on asbestos when dwellings are empty or at the same time as when other major works are being carried out.

Please be aware that this is only a guide to some of the most common types of asbestos and other everyday items may contain asbestos fibres.

### Want to know more?

Pick up our leaflet 'Your guide to asbestos' from any of our offices or call us on 0800 479 7979.