

Owner Forum - 30th October 2007

Minutes

Anne – Fire Safety

- The fire alarm in the hallway is always bleeping. I think my neighbours may have disconnected the sounder in their apartment – could this be related to the bleeping?
- Residents leave buggies/bikes outside their apartment doors. The underground car park is used as a dump for old furniture. What can I do?
- What fire safety systems are usually installed?
- Cars are parked everywhere at night – I don't think a fire tender could gain access if there was a fire. What can we do?

The fire alarm in the hallway is always bleeping. I think my neighbours may have disconnected the sounder in their apartment – could this be related to the bleeping? You should contact your Management Agent. If you have a Fire Alarm Panel this means that the Fire Alarm and Detection System is interlinked in your apartment block. If there is a fire in any apartment or in the common areas the Alarm will be sounded and you should evacuate immediately. Don't be tempted to tamper with the panel in your apartment or in common areas. Leave it to an expert.

Residents leave buggies/bikes outside their apartment doors. The underground car park is used as a dump for old furniture. What can I do?

Common areas should be free from combustible objects. Contact your Management Agent and ask them to contact the owners to resolve. Furniture should be properly disposed of. It is a real danger having furniture or dumped material in a car park. Again, contact your Management Agent to arrange for it to be removed. You should ensure signs are put up in the relevant areas notifying residents that this is an offence.

What fire safety systems are usually installed?

Most complexes now have a mixture of what are called active and passive systems.

Active systems include items such as detection alarms, break glass units, emergency lighting etc. And most buildings should have automatically opening vents which are interlinked to the fire warning system.

Passive systems include items such as wall and floor constructions, fire doors etc.

It is very important that the fire doors and smoke seals are not tampered with, eg Fire doors should be kept closed at all times. It is important that all Active and Passive Fire Safety Measures are maintained over the life span of the building.

Cars are parked everywhere at night – I don't think a fire tender could gain access if there was a fire. What can we do?

The roads in most developments are specifically designed to give access to fire tenders or fire brigades. A width of 3.7metres is needed for fire engines to gain access. If the access roads are being blocked by parked cars the managing agent should be informed and perhaps clamping could be introduced to ensure that the access road is always available should a fire tender need access in the event of a fire. Access roads should be kept clear at all times.

Questions from the Floor

Q: The fire escape at the back of my building is locked by the Management Company. What should I do?

A: *Ring the Managing Agent and demand it be unlocked immediately.*

Q: I got an indication from a fire officer that our doors are not satisfactory. It has been impossible to get a clearer statement from him and I'm finding it very difficult to get quotes. The development is 25 years old so I need clarification about what needs to be updated to meet regulations. I am worried that if I call the Fire Officer in again he will compel us to do this before we have a chance to look at our options. Can you help?

A: *You can employ a fire safety consultant who can inspect your property and advise your management company. You will not be under any obligation to take their advice but this way at least you have the information you need. The consultant can also give you information about suppliers of fire doors.*

Q: Our property still hasn't been vested and the Developers are still Directors. Recently the fire alarm went off and a malfunction with the system caused or doors to lock (rather than unlock). Our Management Agent said it's the Management Company problem. We reported this to DCC. But can someone tell me who is accountable and who can we go to with such a serious breach of fire safety?

A: *As the common areas have not been vested and the Developer are the directors it is the responsibility of the Developer to put right any fault arising in the fire safety system. They maybe reluctant to however the Fire Department can check they have addressed this problem and enforce them to right the situation.*

Q: We have an issue with fire escapes for an older building. What legislation is there - should we be proactive in complying with this and are there any directives we should know about?

A: *Under Fire Services Act 2003 'all reasonable measures should be taken to ensure fire safety procedures are covered'. There should also be a reasonable care clause in your insurance.*

Q: How do you stop people tampering with Break Glass Units?

A: Clear plastic covers are available that cover the break glass units which may help to act as a deterrent to their activating the fire alarm system.

Q: There was a fire in an apartment in my block and the window was damaged. Who is responsible for having this fixed.

A: *On the basis that's it's structural (glass), it can be covered by block insurance.*

Q: Our Fire emergency buttons are not working – what should we do?

A: *Complain to Dublin City Council. You will have to give them access to view*

Q: Does Dublin City Council offer any financial assistance to engage a fire safety consultant ?

A: *Dublin Fire Brigade are the enforcement section and you have to adhere to their recommendations. Consultants are independent and are engaged at your own expense*

Q: Can you clarify the situation regard smoking in common areas? What is covered by law?

A: *Under the Health and Safety and Welfare at Work Act smoking is banned and therefore it's banned from common areas.*

