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trading standards law explained

Goods in rented accommodation

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Although the United Kingdom left the European Union (EU) in 2021, certain pieces of legislation (known as 'assimilated law') continue to apply until such time as they are replaced by new UK legislation, revoked or permitted to expire. This means that our guidance still contains references to legislation that originated from the EU.

In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

Broadly speaking, the law requires that goods are safe when they are supplied, which includes goods supplied in rented accommodation.

Gas installations, appliances and flues must be checked by a Gas Safe-registered person every 12 months and a record of the check must be made available to tenants.

Specific checks are not normally required by law for other products (such as furniture and glazing) but you still have to ensure they are safe under the law, and the best way to do that is to get them tested.

Who does the law apply to?

Anyone who lets residential furnished accommodation (such as houses, flats, bedsits, holiday homes, caravans and boats) as a business activity. This includes letting agents, estate agents and private landlords. Landlords are not the only people who may be liable if goods supplied with the tenancy are not of the standard required by law.

What does the law require?

In general terms, the law requires that goods are safe when they are supplied. This includes any goods supplied as part of a tenancy agreement or in let accommodation. Special safety rules apply to certain types of goods, and some of the main ones are detailed below.

The supply of goods can occur in any of the following situations:

- when the tenancy contract is made
- when the tenant moves into the property
- when goods are newly supplied or installed for an existing tenant

Do I have to carry out specific safety checks?

You are responsible for the safety of the goods that you supply, and it is therefore advisable that you carry out appropriate checks on all the goods in the property.

In particular, the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 contain requirements relating to the installation and use of gas appliances. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) enforces these Regulations; further information can be obtained by contacting the HSE Gas Safety Advice Line on 0800 300363.

It is a legal requirement to have carbon monoxide detectors in all rooms with solid fuel appliances, and landlords are also encouraged to ensure that working carbon monoxide detectors are installed in all rooms with gas installations.

Landlords are required to have yearly checks carried out on gas installations and flues by a Gas Safe-registered person. Landlords can determine the date when the next check is due and, in certain circumstances, can extend this to bring all appliances and flues into alignment. You must keep the records (Gas Safe certificates) of these checks.

Sections 13(4) and 19B(4) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 make it compulsory for agencies and private landlords in Scotland to ensure that a competent electrician inspects and tests electrical installations, fixtures and fitted appliances at least every five years.

In accordance with the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020, similar checks for electrical installations are also required in England. The local authority housing departments are the regulators for this legislation. For more information see the guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities on the GOV.UK website.

Where you do carry out checks, or where you have them done for you, you should keep records. As a minimum, these records should identify what goods were checked, what checks were done (and the results), who did them and when they were done. A copy of the electrical checks, where applicable, has to be given to the tenant within 28 days of the inspection. The landlord will need to retain a copy until the next inspection is due.

The law concerning gas safety checks is the same for holiday lettings as it is with longer-term residential lettings. However, the law concerning electrical checks applies differently for holiday lettings. Nevertheless, electrical installations and appliances still have to be safe, so such checks are still recommended. How frequently they should be repeated may be different for a holiday property than for a long-term residential let, depending on the volume of guests that you cater for.

Furniture

Upholstered furniture included in lettings must comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988*. These impose the same stringent standards to both new and second-hand furniture.

[*These Regulations were amended in October 2025 by the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.]

The Regulations apply to the following:

- all types of upholstered seating, including chairs, settees, padded stools, pouffes, sofa beds and padded headboards
- garden furniture suitable for indoor use
- furniture in caravans
- mattresses, padded bed bases, if the length is less than 170 cm and the width is less than 75 cm. Mattresses intended for use by babies and children are not covered by these Regulations
- scatter cushions, pillows

The safety provisions require that:

- the upholstery must pass a specified cigarette test for flammability (not required for mattresses, bed bases, pillows and cushions)
- the filling must pass a specified ignitability test. There are some exemptions (such as filling materials for cushions and pillows) where the cover passes certain ignitability tests
- furniture with permanent covers (excluding mattresses, bed bases and insulated bags designed for carrying babies under six months) must pass specified match tests. In the case of certain natural fibre covers, if there is an interliner between the furniture and the cover, and the interliner passes specified ignition resistance tests, the cover itself need not pass the match test

Furniture made before 1 January 1950 that has not been modified is excluded from the controls. Bedding, carpets and curtains are also excluded.

How to tell whether furniture complies

You should check to see that a permanent label is present, as this is the best way to show compliance. Most furniture should have a label headed 'CARELESSNESS CAUSES FIRE' that provides at least the following information:

- a batch number or identification number
- an indication as to whether the article of furniture includes an interliner (as described above)
- a summary of the measures that have been taken to ensure compliance with the Regulations

Permanent labels are usually sewn or stapled to the furniture; they can usually be found either under the main seat cushion or on the base of the furniture.

Mattresses and bed bases are not required to bear this type of label. However, compliance with the ignitability tests may be shown by a label stating compliance with British Standard BS 7177: *Specification for resistance to ignition of mattresses, mattress pads, divans and bed bases*. This label has a blue border with white lettering and black cigarette and flame symbols.

Items not bearing any labelling may not conform to the Regulations, and you are advised not to include them in any letting until you have obtained evidence that they comply (for example, from the manufacturer or original supplier).

Electrical equipment

Any new electrical equipment that is being fitted and supplied in accommodation must comply with the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016 and have the CE / UKCA mark.

If the equipment is to be wired directly into the electrical installation of a property, this should be carried out by a suitably qualified engineer.

If the equipment is still in the property when it is let to a subsequent tenant, it is deemed to be second-hand, so the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 will apply instead. These Regulations require that all electrical equipment supplied with the accommodation must be safe. If it complies with an acceptable Standard, such as a British / European Standard, it will normally meet safety requirements.

These safety requirements cover:

- labelling, construction, design and manufacture
- insulation and earthing
- protection from electric shock
- adequate guards for radiant heaters or moving parts
- the need to provide instructions for safe use

Generally:

- access to live, hot or moving parts must not be possible without the use of a tool
- cable must be of the double-insulated type, with no basic insulation exposed
- wiring must not be damaged in any way
- cord grips on appliances must be effective
- all guards must be in place and effective

Wiring colour codes

The wires of a three-core mains lead are coloured as follows:

- earth - green and yellow
- neutral - blue
- live - brown

If you need to change a plug, lead or other connection, have it checked by an electrician. Incorrect wiring may cause electrocution or fire.

Plugs and sockets

All electrical appliances provided with the let must be correctly fitted with an approved plug that has sleeved pins. Approved plugs are those that comply with BS 1363: *13 A plugs, socket-outlets, adaptors and connection units*. All plugs must carry the name and reference number of the approved body, normally BSI (British Standards Institution) or ASTA (ASTA Diamond Mark, run by Intertek). The plug does not have to be moulded on, but it must have a cord grip to secure the lead going into the plug and have the correct fuse for the appliance.

All sockets (for example, on mains extension leads) adaptors and similar devices must meet British or European Standards.

Electric fireguards

The distance between the bars and the strength of the guard are laid down in British Standards.

The fireguard is satisfactory if any vertical bars are 5 mm or less apart. Otherwise, the guard must not have an opening with either:

- a major dimension exceeding 126 mm and a minor dimension exceeding 12 mm
  or
- a major dimension exceeding 53 mm and a minor dimension exceeding 20 mm

Electric blankets

We advise you not to supply used electric blankets because their history, usage and condition may be unknown.

How to tell whether electrical equipment complies

You must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that electrical equipment is safe, correctly labelled and supplied with adequate instructions for safe use.

Gas appliances

Any new gas appliances being fitted into accommodation must comply with assimilated Regulation (EU) 2016/426 *on appliances burning gaseous fuels*, and have the CE / UKCA mark.

They must also be installed by a suitably qualified gas engineer. Trading Standards services enforce this Regulation for new appliances. If the equipment is still in the property when it is let to a subsequent tenant, it is deemed to be second-hand, so the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 will apply instead.

Local housing authorities enforce the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 that set out specific duties for landlords to ensure that the gas installations they supply are maintained in a safe condition.

One way to ensure that gas appliances are safe is to check that they comply with relevant British / European Standards. For example, the applicable Standard for gas cookers is BS EN 30: *Domestic cooking appliances burning gas*.

Cookers must:

- have legible and durable markings on the controls and be marked with the manufacturer's or importer's name
- have adequate pan supports
- have tap handles that are easy to operate, but not liable to be turned on accidentally
- ignite promptly
- have oven doors that seal in hot gases
- have instructions for safe use

They must not have:

- sharp edges
- a casing that gets hot enough to cause injury

Any hob cover must shut off the gas supply, or the cover must have a warning label stating that it does not.

Gas and oil heater fireguards

The General Product Safety Regulations 2005 require all fireguards on gas fires and oil heaters to be safe. One method of ensuring this is by compliance to British / European Standards.

Oil heaters and used gas fires that do not satisfy specific design criteria involving the hearth and installation instructions must be fitted with a guard that either:

- does not permit a 35 mm diameter probe to touch the heated radiants or the flame
  or
- has no gap larger than 150 mm x 35 mm, and no gap with a diameter larger than 154 mm

The guard must pass certain strength tests.

If it is not possible to pass a 12 mm diameter probe through the gap, or the gap is between vertical rods no greater than 5 mm apart, the requirement to fit heaters and fires with a guard does not apply.

Gas catalytic heaters

Gas catalytic heaters must not contain unbonded asbestos.

Paraffin heaters

The Oil Heaters (Safety) Regulations 1977 apply to paraffin heaters. Controls cover stability, flame extinction and labelling.

Glazing

The Construction Products Regulations 2013 cover glazing. If you are buying replacement glazing, safety glass must be used in critical locations, as follows:

- any glazing that is less than 800 mm from the floor
- any glazing in a door that is less than 1,500 mm from the floor, or within 300 mm either side of a door

Small glass panes (with a smaller dimension up to 250 mm, and a total area up to 0.5 m^2) do not need to be made of safety glass, as long as they are thick enough (6 mm in most cases). However, if you are buying a replacement door, for example, with small panes, it is better to choose safety glass if it is available.

Other appliances and equipment

All equipment and items not covered by specific regulations must comply with the General Product Safety Regulations 2005. You must ensure that all items you supply with the accommodation are safe. This will include supplying warnings and instructions with the items, where they are necessary for the safe use of the items.

For example:

- mechanical lawn mowers, strimmers, etc must be provided with the necessary guards in place
- chairs and stepladders must be strong enough to support a person's weight
- glass in furniture must satisfy British Standards, where applicable
- ironing boards, clothes dryers, etc must not have sharp edges that could cause injury in normal use
- blinds must have a cord that does not pose a strangulation hazard

You are advised to check all items at regular intervals to ensure that they are safe.

Dangerous products

It is best practice to check that goods provided with your rental property have not been recalled due to safety issues. Information about product recalls and safety alerts can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

Updated to cover the changes made by the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2025. The requirement for display labelling has been removed, and pushchairs, carry cots, baby walkers, etc no longer fall under the definition of upholstered furniture.

Last reviewed / updated: October 2025

Key legislation

- Oil Heaters (Safety) Regulations 1977
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988
- Plugs and Sockets etc (Safety) Regulations 1994
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- General Product Safety Regulations 2005
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
- Construction Products Regulations 2013
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016
- assimilated Regulation (EU) 2016/426 *on appliances burning gaseous fuels*
- Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2025

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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