

# HOME SAFETY



## Our approach to home safety

We are committed to keeping residents safe in their homes by maintaining our properties, responding to repairs in a timely fashion and providing information and advice to residents.

## What we mean by home safety

Octavia encourages all residents to take care in their homes because more accidents happen at home than anywhere else:

- ▶ Every year there are approximately 6,000 deaths in the UK as the result of a home accident.
- ▶ More than two million children under the age of 15 are taken to A&E following accidents in and around the home every year.
- ▶ Children under the age of five and people over 75 are most likely to have an accident at home.
- ▶ Falls are the most common accidents, which can cause serious injury at any time of life. The risk increases with age.

## Risks of falls

Children are at particular risk from falls in the home.

Every year more than 4,200 children are involved in falls on the stairs and 4,000 children under the age of 15 are injured falling from windows.



## Safety on stairs

If there are stairs inside your home, keep children and older people safe by making sure that there is nothing to trip over. Remind children to hold the handrail all the time when walking down the stairs.

## Window safety

Make sure that children can't fall out of upstairs windows by:

- ▶ Checking safety catches which are installed to prevent windows opening wide.
- ▶ Keeping furniture in children's bedrooms away from windows. A child can be at risk if they can climb from a bed onto a window sill.

(Report any faulty windows or window safety catches to our repairs team)

## Balconies

Take care on your balcony and don't leave children unsupervised on any balcony.

## Lift safety

Be careful not to trap clothing, bag straps or other items in lift doors. If you find damage to a lift or if a lift fails to stop at the correct floor level, please report it to our repairs team so we can arrange for the lift to be repaired.

## Safety in the kitchen

Safety in the kitchen is important to prevent fires and keep children safe.

- ▶ Don't leave items cooking on the hob - turn off the hob if you leave the kitchen.
- ▶ Be especially careful if cooking with oil or fat – frying pans should be no more than one third full and make sure that food is dry before frying.
- ▶ Keep knives sharp and in good condition and out of reach of children.
- ▶ If children may come into the kitchen, make sure it is safe for them.
- ▶ Take extra care with hot water, tea, coffee or soup. If there are young children around, they could get scalded.
- ▶ Don't leave cooking unattended if there are children in or around the kitchen.
- ▶ Use a cordless kettle or one with a coiled lead so that children cannot pull on them.
- ▶ Keep pan handles turned inward so that children cannot reach them and pull them over.



## Asbestos

### What is asbestos?

Asbestos materials were used in buildings throughout the twentieth century, particularly from the 1950s to the 1980s. No asbestos has been used in buildings in the UK since 1999.

### Can asbestos be harmful?

Some building materials which contain asbestos can be damaged and release dust in the form of asbestos fibres, which can be harmful to health if people breathe them in; but most of the materials which were used in housing contain only small amounts of asbestos and do not usually release any fibres. For example, some vinyl floor tiles contain asbestos but fibres are not released even if the tiles are cracked and broken.

### What is Octavia doing?

We are committed to managing the risks from asbestos materials which are present in our buildings and almost all the materials which can give rise to a health risk have been removed from our properties. We make sure that any remaining materials which could present a risk are kept in a safe condition so that they can be removed without danger when properties are empty.

### What should you do?

As an Octavia resident, there may be materials which contain asbestos in your home if it was built in 1999 or before but these materials will not release any asbestos fibres under normal circumstances. Asbestos may have been used in the manufacture of vinyl floor tiles or plastic toilet cisterns or included in artex or similar decorative coatings applied to ceilings etc. You should treat all such items as if they contain asbestos and take care not to damage such items - do not drill or sand them.

If you would like more information about materials containing asbestos which may be in your property, please contact your Resident Service Officer or visit [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/building.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/building.htm)

## Electrical safety

Many accidents and fatalities involve electricity - it must be treated with respect to prevent electric shocks and fires. Here are some tips:

- ▶ Avoid overloading electric sockets with too many appliances.
- ▶ Do not use appliances with worn or damaged flexes or plugs. Don't wire flexes together.
- ▶ Keep portable mains-operated appliances out of the bathroom and never touch electrical appliances with wet hands
- ▶ Have electric blankets serviced and checked regularly.
- ▶ If an appliance appears faulty stop using it and have it checked at once.

## Water hygiene

Octavia is committed to ensuring that every home has a safe clean water supply and works with Thames Water to comply with legal standards. Things you do in the home can affect the quality of your water and even encourage bacteria growth. Here are some tips to help prevent bacterial growth and contamination of the water supply.

### Away from home?

If you are away from home for a long period (for example, on holiday or in hospital) the water in your system can deteriorate. When you return home, heat up your system to the normal temperature, open each tap and run for at least 5 minutes. Cold taps should be flushed until the water runs cold.

### Showers

Did you know that it is possible for the water in your shower to be contaminated with bacteria? This can be a problem but simple precautions can keep your shower water clean:

- ▶ Inspect your shower-head regularly and if there is limescale or other visible dirt which can allow germs to grow, clean it using a brush then soak it in a cleaning solution (cleaning your shower head will also improve the flow of water for a better, wetter shower)
- ▶ If you have a shower with a flexible hose, keep the shower-head on the wall support provided which will prevent any water remaining in the hose.
- ▶ Following a holiday or if the shower has not been used for an extended period, it is important to flush the pipes and hose before taking a shower. Run the shower hot for at least 2 minutes before getting into it. If your shower has a flexible hose, put the shower head in a bucket if you have one to reduce spray.

### Taps

Taps on your bath, basin and sink may become contaminated from external sources. To be safe sterilise taps by wiping with a dilute bleach solution, if the tap is heavily scaled or contaminated this can be dislodged using a nylon brush.

### Hot and cold water systems

If you have a domestic hot water cylinder in your home the thermostat is set at 60°C, do not reduce this setting or the setting of your boiler thermostat, as bacteria can multiply at lower temperatures.

If you have a combination boiler or multi-point water heater do not reduce the hot water thermostat setting.

### Immersion heater safety alert

If your water is heated by an immersion heater, look out for warning signs that there may be a problem:

- ▶ Excessively hot water coming out of the hot water taps
- ▶ Excessive noise or 'burbling' from the hot water cylinder
- ▶ Hot water coming out of certain cold water taps

## What you can expect from our service

We work hard to keep our properties safe for residents. We carry out risk assessments to identify safety concerns and complete improvement works to address them.

If repairs are needed to your property then contact our repairs team. If you have concerns about the safety of your home or wish to report an incident then please complete a fire hazard form at [www.octaviahousing.org.uk/contact-us/report-a-fire-hazard](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk/contact-us/report-a-fire-hazard) or inform your resident service officer.

We will stay in regular contact with you to keep you updated on what we are doing to help resolve the problem and to get updates from you.

## Making sure we are succeeding

We work with external regulators, including the London Fire Brigade, to check that we follow good practice for safety in our properties. We investigate accidents and incidents and review our health and safety performance with help from external experts.

## How to contact us about home safety

If you are concerned about home safety or other safety issues in your home, please contact your resident service officer straight away.

If you need help disposing of large items, you can contact your local council to collect them. You can find their details on our website. Remember to tell us if you are leaving items outside for collection, so we do not think they have been abandoned.

You can also report any items you see left in shared areas on our website [www.octaviahousing.org.uk](http://www.octaviahousing.org.uk) or to our communal services and improvements officer on the number below.

Please contact us if you need any part of this information in Braille, on audio tape or explained in a different language.

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