Safety guidelines...

It is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure that their property is complying with all health and safety requirements and required legislation related to the letting of self-catering accommodation. This also applies when homeowners may be employing a third party (such as a caretaker or housekeeper) to carry out services on their behalf. All owners working with New Forest Escapes are committed to doing this as part of their agreement. Even where specific legislation does not exist, we expect all our owners to have a duty of care for our clients.

This means adopting a thoughtful and common sense approach aimed at minimising the opportunity for unfortunate accidents and ensuring all our guests have a safe and successful stay. This Safety Fact Sheet is intended to provide general safety advice for self-catering properties and is designed to introduce owners to the priorities of Health and Safety, including required legislation, minimizing hazards and risk assessments. We have also included general areas of safety and common sense pointers that may not necessarily by covered by legislation, but should still be followed in order to meet minimum safety standards.

More detailed information is available from Regional Tourist Board Business Advisory Services plus official organisations/local government offices and legal advisors (if appropriate). Local Trading Standards Office may also be able to offer homeowners advice.Please note that whilst all attempts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this Safety Checklist, they are intended as a general guide rather than as a definitive statement of the law. If further information on legal implications are required or if you have any queries, please contact the New Forest Escapes team who can direct you to further counsel or authorities.

Electricity

Every electrical installation will deteriorate over usage and time, and it is important to ensure all electrical circuits, plugs and appliances in the property are maintained in a safe and serviceable condition.

The Electricity at Work Regulations (1989) are wide-ranging but homeowners should be aware that all electrical systems in place must be maintained: 'so far as is reasonably practicable' to avoid danger to all who use the premises (including guests).

So, while there is no specific legal requirement for routine testing of electrical systems, we recommend regular testing of all the appliances in the property to ensure they are safe to use.

Any service visits (together with details of any actions taken) should be retained for a minimum of six years. In the event of an accident involving electrical systems, these records will ensure homeowners can demonstrate they have complied with their duty of maintenance under the above regulations.



If homeowners want to have their electrical systems tested professionally, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advise selecting electrical contractors that belong to the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) or the Electrical Contractors' Association.

Periodic Electrical Safety Inspection

This inspection reviews the condition of the property's existing electrical installation and identifies (in order of priority) any inadequacies against the National Standard (BS 7671). It is highly recommended that this is completed by a qualified electrician every five years.

For more information on Electricity at Work Regulations – including scheduled maintenance and testing and how to inspect equipment – we recommend referring to Maintaining Portable Electrical Equipment in Hotels and Tourist Accommodation, which is available from Local Environmental Health Officers and Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Gas

Under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, homeowners are responsible for ensuring that all the gas appliances in the property are: 'maintained in a safe condition so as to prevent injury to any person'.

Therefore homeowners are required to:

- Ensure all gas fittings and flues are well-maintained and kept in a safe condition.
- Ensure an annual gas safety check (Landlords Gas Safety Certificate) is carried out on every gas appliance/flue by a registered Gas Safe engineer.
- A working, audible carbon monoxide detector is fitted in a suitable location according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Every property must prominently display a copy of the Landlords Gas Safety Certificate. Service information plus details of any corrective action to rectify faults must be recorded and retained for at least six years. In the event of an accident involving the gas supplies on your premises, these records will demonstrate that you have complied with your duty of maintenance under the regulations.

The regulations state that:

- Only engineers registered on the Gas Safe Register can carry out work or maintenance on gas appliances or fittings.
- Person/s must not use any gas appliance or fitting that they know or suspect to be unsafe.
- With the exception of 'room sealed' appliances, there are restrictions on the installation of gas appliances in sleeping areas fitted after 1st January 1996.
- Since 31st October 1998 it has been illegal to install water heaters that are not room-sealed or fitted with a safety device which automatically turns off the gas supply before a dangerous level of poisonous fumes build-up.



Gas Cookers

For properties with a second-hand gas cooker, the Gas Cooking Appliances (Safety) Regulations 1989 have specific detailed safety requirements.

- Where gas cooking facilities are provided the appliance should be fitted with burner caps and on/off control knobs.
- Gas cookers must operate normally and safely.
- Cooking appliances should be sited within the property in a level, stable and secure position and positioned away from combustible materials e.g. curtains.
- All gas cylinders must be stored in an easily accessible, secure and well-ventilated compartment .
- The flexible gas hose connection from the gas cylinder or gas supply to the gas cooking appliance should be secured with suitable fastenings at both ends.
- Only engineers registered on the Gas Safe Register can carry out work or maintenance on gas appliances or fittings.
- Person/s must not use any gas appliance or fitting that they know or suspect to be unsafe.
- Clear operating instructions for guests should be provided in English for all gas appliances.

Open Fires / Log Burners

For properties with open fires, log burners or multi fuel stoves, the property owner is required to have the chimney swept annually (kept certificate safe) and ensure there is an appropriately located working carbon monoxide detector.

All open fires and burners require an appropriately sized fireguard mesh that prevents sparks penetrating or allows children to poke their fingers through. There should also be a fireside companion set provided, a pair of heat proof gloves (for log burners), a metal bucket for hot ashes and a fire extinguisher close by.

Fire Risk and Assessment

In order to use your property as an FHL it is necessarily to complete a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) of the property and record the findings and any corrective actions taken.

Guidance on how to complete your Fire Risk Assessment yourself can be obtained from: **communities.gov.uk**, however it is recommended to engage a Fire Safety Inspector to evaluate your property for you. Please get in touch for details of our trusted local suppliers.

The FRA will then clearly detail the requirement for your property, and any actions needed for installation & maintenance of smoke, heat and CO^2 alarms.

Your property's upholstered furniture also has to meet certain fire safety requirements, please see **Furniture & Furnishings Fire Safety** (next in this handbook) for more information.



Water Supply

If the water supply for your accommodation comes from a private supply (this may include water from springs, streams, boreholes or wells), then the Private Water Supplies Regulations 2009 apply.

This requires local authorities to complete a Private Water Supplies Risk Assessment once every five years and analyse samples of water every 12 months. The frequency of samples depends on:

- Whether the water is used for domestic purposes only or for commercial purposes (a holiday rental property is considered a commercial purpose)
- The number of people using the supply
- The amount of water used from the supply
- The average daily volume of water provided from the supply.

The water analysis report together with details of any corrective action taken to rectify faults should be recorded and retained for a minimum of six years.· In the event of an incident involving the water supply on your premises this record should enable you to demonstrate that you have complied with your duty of maintenance under the regulations.

Windows

Whatever style of window, there should never be an instance where a child has access to a window opening greater than 4 inches (10cm). If an upstairs window has a low-level window ledge (less than 1 metre from the ground) it is necessary to fit window restrictors.

Stairways

All stairways of more than three steps should have a secure banister rail or support. Where this is not possible due to the architectural design of the property, or if the property features a spiral, open tread, steep or narrow, winding staircase, this will need to be included in the house description and made aware to guests via the New Forest Escapes team. Where children are accommodated, a secure safety gate should be provided.

Bathrooms

We ask our owners to ensure all shower heads are of any rust or sediments and all hand basins, baths, shower trays, tiles and toilets are free from cracks, with a clear proceedure in place to indentify and replace any damaged items.

Non-slip bathmats should be provided for the floors in all bathrooms to prevent accidents and they must be replaced when worn.

If the property has a whirlpool bath, it must be managed in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. As a minimum, a written record of cleaning and disinfecting of the bath must be kept and they should be thoroughly cleaned each changeover day.



Glass Partitions

If your property contains a large pane of glass that is at risk of being broken or walked into then it should be glazed with safety glass and clearly marked at adult eye level (approx 1.5m) and child eye level (approx 0.80m).

Glass must also be fitted securely in balcony door frames and windows, and balcony doors must have inside and outside handles for ease of access.

Children's Safety

Bunk beds must conform to BS EN 747 (1 & 2) and be assembled as per the manufacturer's instructions. They must be fitted with suitable, secure ladders and where a base is more than 800mm above floor level, there must not be a gap in the base of more than 75mm. Gaps elsewhere should be no less than 60mm or more than 75mm.

Cots must conform to the British Safety Standard and be assembled as specified.

They must be clean, well-constructed and maintained regularly, with no sharp edges, chipped paint or lead-based paints. We recommend providing cots without wheels, and those with wheels need to have a locking device provided.

Special attention should be given to the width of the cot bars, which should be vertical and no more than 6.5cm apart (to ensure a child's head cannot get trapped). There should be at least 50 cm from the top of the mattress to the top of the cot and modern safety mattresses (which leave no gaps between cot frame and mattress) should be provided.

The cot mattress must be the correct size and in good condition, free from any tears and splits and covered in a cleanable material. We suggest purchasing a new travel cot and mattress to ensure it will meet up to date safety requirements.

Highchairs must be clean, well-maintained and have at least a three-point working harness. We ask that highchairs be provided without wheels and if owners are providing clip-on highchairs, please ensure they are clearly labelled with the age and weight restrictions and are made of tough durable plastic.

Playground type equipment such as garden swings or slides must also comply with BS Standards, it's recommended you source equipment that meets BS EN 1176 as this means the equipment will comply with more stringent commercial standards. It should always be installed according to the manufacturer's instructions and be located in a safe and clean area that is free of hazards. All play equipment must be regularly maintained and in good condition and on an impact absorbent surface that is suitable for children. Please ensure there are obvious warning signs displayed advising that 'CHILDREN MUST BE SUPERVISED AT ALL TIMES BY AN ADULT'.

Activities that are available for guests to use as part of their rental of the property must be regularly maintained and insured for public use. Any activity equipment included within the property rental (including playground type equipment) must be regularly checked and parts replaced to ensure it is of sound working order.

Cleaning products (including dishwasher tablets) must be kept out of reach of children. We suggest using child safety locks on cupboards where cleaning products are stored.



Gardens & Terraces

Please ensure that any garden furniture and barbecues are well- maintained, clean and in a safe condition for use together with clear instructions available to guests. Alert the NFE team to any potential hazards on the property and ensure they are clearly marked for guests.
This many include:

- Garden ponds (fenced or unfenced)
- Streams or rivers
- Water features
- Significant drops in the landscaping
- Any machinery/farm vehicles within the vicinity of the property
- Inspection covers for septic tanks, wells and water butts (which must be securely fitted)

NB If the property is described as having an enclosed garden, please ensure all access gates are fitted with secure latches that are out of reach of children.

Balconies

All balconies should be well-constructed and have balusters that are set no more than 10cm apart. The overall height from floor to the top of the rail should be a minimum of 1m (for new builds it's now 1.1m). If this is not possible due to the architectural nature of the property please make the NFE team aware so we can inform guests.

Outside Lights

All outside pathways, walkways and exterior steps should be well maintained (+ kept clear of snow or ice during winter months). Automatic outside lights should be installed so that access to the property is safe for night time arrivals, as well as a well-lit house sign with the number or name clearly visible from the road.

Gates & Garages

Any electrically operated gates and/or garage doors must be clearly signed and guests must be given clear written operating instructions.

Hot Tubs & Saunas

Heated Hot Tubs and Saunas must be managed in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and include clear written instructions on the operation of the device plus the hazards associated with use.

You must keep records of chemical treatments for the hot tub and details of any corrective action along with written procedures for the cleaning and disinfection. In all circumstances we recommend that you obtain professional advice specific to the hot tubs you use. Further information can be found in **Hot Tub Safety** (next in this handbook).



Swimming Pools

Swimming pools are a fabulous addition to a property and well received by guests, however they need to be well-maintained and regularly serviced to ensure they are clean and safe to swim in.

Please ensure the house manual has details on the scheduled servicing and cleaning of the pool and alert guests to when the pool may be closed for maintenance. If you are using a third party to service the swimming pool, include those contact details in case of any issues during a guest's stay.

Swimming pools can also be dangerous places and require guidelines to ensure they are a safe environment for guests. These guidelines include:

- Providing a clear display of poolside notices stating: 'THIS POOL IS NOT SUPERVISED' and 'CHILDREN MUST BE SUPERVISED BY AN ADULT AT ALL TIMES'.
- 'NO DIVING' signs should be displayed where the pool depth is less than 10 foot deep. Significant drops in the landscaping
- Ensure 'IN CASE OF EMERGENCY' contact details, local health centres and hospital contacts are available.
- Where possible a pool should be secured when not in use either with fencing and lockable gates (outdoor pools) or lockable entrance doors (indoor pools).
- The surround of the pool should be non-slip and regularly checked for any cracked or broken tiles.
- Clearly visible and accurate depth markings should be present around the pool.
- Pools should have obvious and easily accessible rescue equipment such as a reach pole or buoyancy aid.
- There must be no diving boards or platforms.
- The pool should be free from suction and entrapment possibilities.
- Pool disinfection and chemical dosing records should be retained, including a record of the chemicals used in the pool.
- All pool chemicals, pump and filtration plants should be under lock and key.
- We suggest providing bamboo/recycled plastic glasses/ crockery for guests to use around the pool as well as additional pool towels.

