

ADVICE TO GIVE TENANTS ON PROPERTY CARE FOUND IN YOUR LET

GUIDELINES ON GIVING TENANTS ADVICE TO HELP CARE FOR YOUR PROPERTY

While it is a landlord's legal obligation to maintain a buy to let property in what is legally known as **'fit for human habitation'**, tenants play a key part in the upkeep of their rental home, not only ensuring they treat it in a 'tenant-like manner,' but they are best placed to spot problems before they become too serious.

Here we set out guidelines on giving tenants advice on dealing with issues that may arise in your let, as well as tips on how renters can play their part in preventing or fixing problems.



'TENANT-LIKE MANNER'



HOW TO DEAL WITH DAMP AND MOULD



ROOFS AND GUTTERING



THE BOILER



BLOCKAGES



LIGHTING



THE LOFT



SECURITY



HAVING A WATERTIGHT LEASE



WHAT DOES A 'TENANT-LIKE MANNER' MEAN?

Landlords cannot dictate how a tenant lives, but renters are obliged to live in a tenant-like manner. This means:

- Keeping the home reasonably clean and in a reasonable state
- Safety checks on electrical appliances they own
- Keeping gardens or outside areas, if there is one, in a reasonable state
- Changing light bulbs or smoke alarm batteries and other minor maintenance
- Repairing any damage they cause, either deliberately, through neglect or by accident



LET ISSUE 1:

HOW TO DEAL WITH DAMP AND MOULD

Damp and mould can be a serious health concern and it is a landlord's legal responsibility to ensure it is dealt with.

But there are also ways tenants can prevent and manage mould and damp issues.



Condensation is the most common form of damp in rented properties. It is often worse in winter when excess moisture in the air comes into contact with a cold surface, such as a window or a wall, which can then cause mould growth. The most common cause of condensation and mould growth is poor ventilation or heating, or inadequate insulation.



Penetrating damp is caused by water coming through external walls or the roof, or if there is an internal leak or a plumbing problem.



TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Rising and penetrating damp is usually caused by the structure of the property, but condensation can be made worse by a tenant's lifestyle.

Tips for minimising condensation:

- Covering pans when cooking
- Use extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom
- Closing internal doors when cooking or showering
- Not having furniture flush to an external walls
- Opening bedroom windows for 5-10 minutes in the morning
- Heating the home properly, ideally not allowing the temperature in a room to drop below 15 degrees. In cold weather it is recommended that the heating is left on as often as possible
- Ask your tenants to flag any issues to you as soon as possible



Will my landlord's insurance cover mould issues?

This will depend on the type of cover you have, the cause of the mould or damp and how well the property has been maintained. If the property is in good condition and the issue has been caused by a storm or other insured event, then your insurance policy is more likely to cover you. Check with your insurance provider when you take out cover.



LET ISSUE 2:

ROOFS & GUTTERING

In terms of general prevention, roofs, guttering and drains must all be kept in good working order, particularly after heavy rain, storms or snow.

Landlords are responsible for the repair and maintenance of a property's structure and interior but tenants, if they have responsibility for the garden, should be mindful of leaf fall clogging up drains and guttering in autumn. If there are leaks or obvious water escape, it is important the tenant flags this to you or your representative letting agent as soon as possible.



LET ISSUE 3:

THE BOILER

Tenants should **regularly check the boiler's pressure gauge, to ensure it does not drop below 1.5 bars.** If they do find themselves with no hot water or heating, this should be the first step. If this does not fix the issue, they should contact you ASAP.



LET ISSUE 4:

BLOCKAGES

Tenants should attempt to unblock sinks, toilets and external drains using bleach or specific products in the event of a blockage. They should also dispose of sanitary products, food or hairs correctly and not in sinks, down the toilet or external drains.

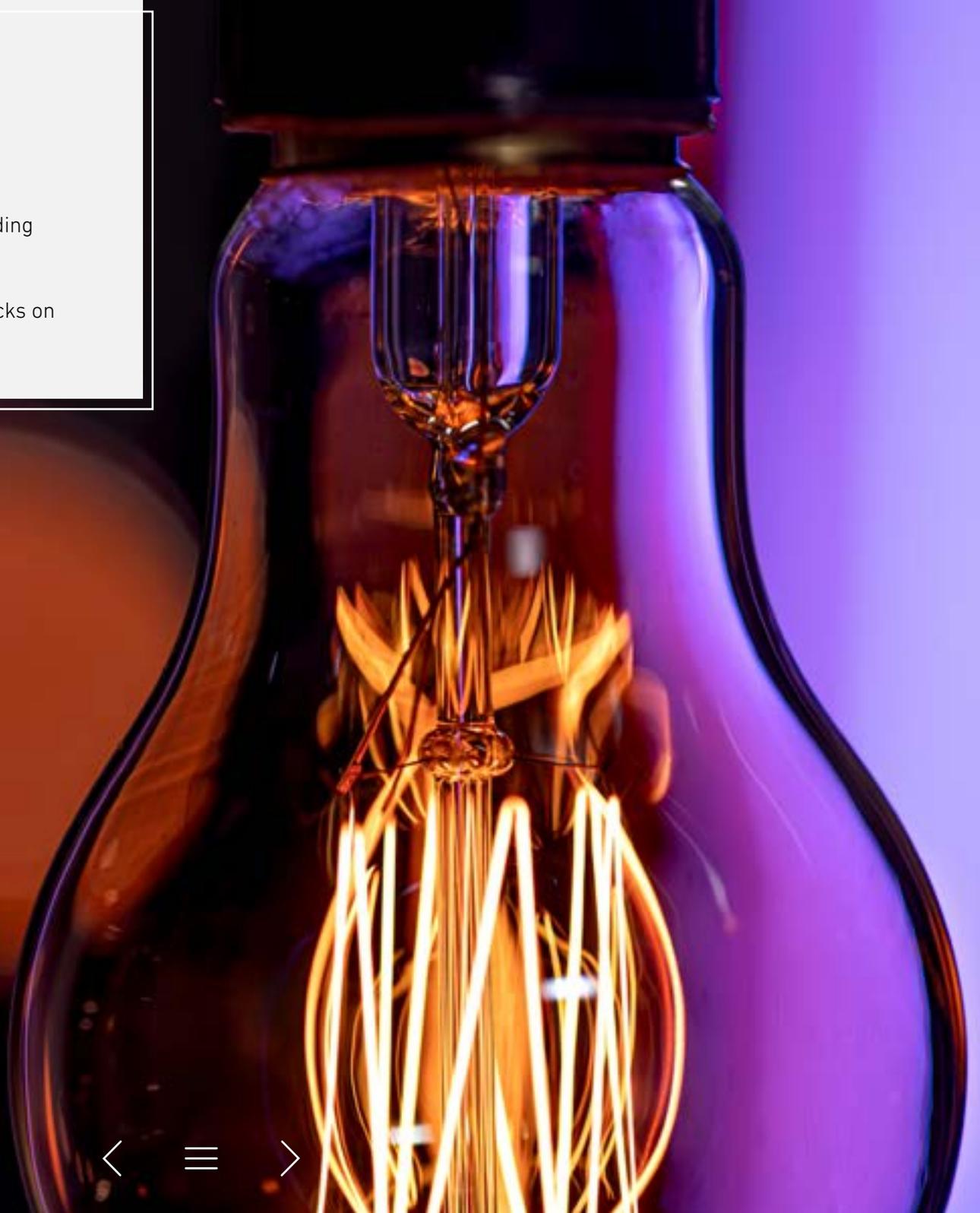


LET ISSUE 5:

LIGHTING

It is a tenant's responsibility to change light bulbs, including fluorescent strip style lights.

They should also change batteries that might power clocks on items such as ovens.



LET ISSUE 6:

THE LOFT

The loft is not part of the living space of a let home, but, unless specifically excluded in a tenancy agreement, it is let as part of a tenancy.

Tenants are **advised not to use it as anything other than a storage space and are best asked not to store heavy items.** If they do use it to store lightweight items, they will need to put down boards in a section of the loft space. They should not place items onto plasterboard or in loft insulation.

Damage caused by a tenant using a loft, such as putting a foot through the ceiling, or if they leave any items there at the end of a tenancy, could be claimed against their deposit.

Is a loft covered by landlord insurance?

If you are renting out a loft with your let, it would be advisable to consult your insurer to ask about the safety hazard aspect.



LET ISSUE 7:

SECURITY

According to National Home Security Month research, around 5% of burglaries involve an unlocked door. But even locked doors can fail to keep the wrong people out.

Recent statistics have shown that around **76% of domestic burglaries are made via a door**, with a forced lock and an unlocked door being the top two most common methods of door entry. Tenants are responsible for locking up and securing the property when they're out or at night.

New technology has made it easier to make a place look lived-in. Individual light timers and television simulator lights can work just as well as a deterrent so consider supplying your tenants with these gadgets and explain the importance of using them.



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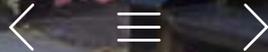


HAVE A WATERTIGHT LEASE - AND GOOD LANDLORD INSURANCE COVER

So many of these issues can be avoided - or at least put landlords in a stronger legal position - with a comprehensive lease, which is why it almost always pays to have one drawn up through a professional company.

Having an accidental damage clause in your landlord insurance can also help put your mind at ease. This covers the cost of repairs or damage to your property or contents, for example if a tenant spills wine on your carpet.

Damage must be accidental and disrepair caused by neglect may not always be covered, so check the T&Cs thoroughly.



HELP IS AT HAND - GET IN TOUCH WITH RENTGUARD

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