

Safety in your building

23 July 2024

Rainbow House,
Water Lane,
Watford,
WD17 2AP

Dear residents,

New Stay Put fire strategy and removal of waking watch on Tuesday 30 July

We have now come to the end of the external wall remediation project at Rainbow House. In additions, we have also replaced all flat entrance doors with fire-resisting door sets, repaired communal doors and we have undertaken a Type 2 Fire Risk Assessment within communal areas. We'd like to thank all our residents for their cooperation during this time.

Fire engineer's advice

We have now been advised by fire engineer CHPK that the fire strategy at Rainbow House can revert back to its original "stay put" strategy, the temporary alarm system removed, and the evacuation manager is no longer required.

New fire strategy

Therefore, we are writing to confirm the **evacuation manager will end their patrol on Tuesday 30 July at 12pm and Rainbow House will revert to a stay put fire strategy.** This means you should stay in your flat unless you are affected by a fire or smoke. We have notified the fire brigade of the changes. In addition, the fire alarm system will be removed from this time. We will remove the heat detectors within flats in the period after. Further guidance is included in the document below.

We still need to make sure escape routes are clear, so please ensure **no items are stored in communal areas.** We have a zero-tolerance approach and personal items left in the communal areas will be removed. Flammable items such as BBQs, gas bottles, cardboard and packaging should not be stored on balconies. These need to be removed immediately, as this is a breach of your tenancy/lease.

Got a question? Then get in touch on Customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk or **0300 373 3000.**

Kind regards

Raj Gandecha
Head of Resident Management (Building Safety)

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Summary of this letter

From Tuesday 30 July at 12pm, Rainbow House's fire strategy will change to **Stay Put.**

The evacuation manager will also be stood down from that time, as well as the fire alarm system. Further information about the removal of sounders can be found in the attached guidance.

Stay put means:

You should stay in your home unless you are directly affected by smoke, heat or fire, or are told to evacuate by the fire brigade.

Rainbow House
Change in Fire Strategy
July 2024



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Glossary of terms

- **CHPK Fire** – The fire engineering firm that SNG appointed to oversee remediation works at Rainbow House, which issued the EWS1 Form and carried out a survey of internal parts.
- **Compartmentation** – The sub-division of a building into smaller areas or zones using fire resistant materials to control/slow the spread of fire or smoke. These tend to be individual flats, communal areas such as corridors and functioning areas such as riser cupboards.
- **Interim fire strategy** – The fire strategy that was put in place in March 2020, on becoming aware of the external wall issues. Rainbow House’s interim fire strategy was changed to a ‘Simultaneous Evacuation’ strategy.
- **Type 2 Fire Risk Assessment** – An intrusive survey of fire stopping and compartmentation in common parts.
- **Type 4 Fire Risk Assessment** – An intrusive survey of fire stopping and compartmentation within flats.

Summary

This guide is to help you and your household understand the proposed changes to the fire strategy at Rainbow House ahead of the **change to a ‘Stay Put’ strategy on Tuesday 30 July**.

Frequently asked questions:

If you have any more questions, email us on customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk.

Fire strategy

1. What is my Building’s fire strategy?

The building’s strategy is currently a simultaneous evacuation strategy. **From 30 July** at 12pm, the building will change back to a **stay put strategy**.

2. What is a stay put strategy?

Rainbow House, similar to most purpose-built blocks of flats, was designed and constructed with a stay put strategy. As defined in the Government’s Document “Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats” a stay put policy involves the following approach:

- *When a fire occurs within a flat, the occupants alert others in the flat, make their way out of the building and summon the fire and rescue service.*
- *If a fire starts in the common parts, anyone in these areas makes their way out of the building and summons the fire and rescue service.*
- *All other residents not directly affected by the fire would be expected to ‘stay put’ and remain in their flat unless directed to leave by the fire and rescue service.*

Rainbow House had been operating as a stay put strategy prior to March 2020, when it was changed to a simultaneous evacuation fire strategy.

Further guidance on stay put strategies can be accessed on the London Fire Brigade website: <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/escape-plan/escape-plan-blocks-of-flats/>.

3. Why was the fire strategy changed?

The fire strategy was changed on the advice and guidance of our fire engineer in March 2020 after issues were found in the external wall system. Our fire engineer has witnessed and identified that these defects have now been rectified and all materials on the façades that could allow the spread of fire removed. We have issued an EWS1 form to all residents which can be viewed here:

<https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/media/19678/ews1-fe00393-rainbow-house.pdf>.

4. Why will the fire strategy not remain as an evacuation strategy?

Rainbow House was designed to have a stay put or 'Defend in Place' fire strategy. This policy is endorsed and supported by the London Fire Brigade and the National Fire Chiefs Council. The stay put policy is recommended by our Fire Risk Assessor and meets the design of Rainbow House.

5. What has been happening since the external wall works completed in Summer 2023?

Since the external wall works completed last summer, SNG has undertaken works to the fire doors within the property. All flat entrance doors have been replaced and repairs have been undertaken to communal fire doors. Our fire engineer has also undertaken a Type 2 Fire Risk Assessment of the communal areas and is satisfied that the fire strategy can be reverted back to a stay put strategy.

6. What will happen on Tuesday 30 July?

Our fire engineer has identified that the strategy can be changed back to a **stay put strategy**. On the 30 July at 12pm, the temporary alarm will be switched off and the existing fire alarm detection system to support a stay put strategy will be recommissioned.

The wireless heat detectors within your flat will need to be removed and the area directly around the detector made good. Our team will be in touch with you to confirm when the detectors are to be removed. Please do not remove these detectors yourselves.

Fire action notices within your block will also be changed and the fire brigade will be notified.

The evacuation manager that was installed in March 2020 will also be stood down and be removed from site and you will no longer see this individual patrolling the building.

7. Why is the evacuation manager and fire alarm system being removed?

The evacuation manager and the interim alarm measures that were installed to support the interim fire strategy, when it was changed to a simultaneous evacuation strategy, are no longer required.

In blocks of flats like Rainbow House, where they have been designed to support a stay put strategy, it is unnecessary and undesirable for an alarm system to be connected into flats. A communal system with an alarm system may lead to false alarms, and this will impose a burden on the fire rescue service and lead to residents ignoring alarms.

Flats in Rainbow House are installed with a standalone detection and alarm system. This means that devices are not connected into the communal alarm system, and a fire within a flat will not notify the wider estate. If a fire is detected within an individual apartment, it will only notify that flat. You should only evacuate if you are directly affected by heat, fire or smoke, or told to by the fire brigade.

8. How does the communal system work under a stay put policy?

In the event of a fire in a communal corridor, there is a detection/alarm system within this area. Detectors are positioned along corridors and will activate the Automatic Opening Vents (AOVs), the lifts will ground, and cross corridor doors will shut. The block entrance doors will also open.

9. Will there be any other surveys undertaken?

We have instructed our fire risk assessor to update the Fire Risk Assessment straight after the fire strategy is reverted. Fire door surveys will also continue to be undertaken, as per the frequency of the Fire Safety Act 2024. It is also likely we will undertake a Type 4 Fire Risk Assessment within the building in the coming months. This survey is a more in depth assessment of the compartmentation measures. We have undertaken a small sample of opening up within flats alongside our fire engineer, who has risk assessed the findings.

10. How will the fire brigade know the strategy has changed?

We have sent an email to the Watford Fire Brigade to let them know of the reversion of the policy.

Emergency procedures

11. What do I do in the event of a fire within my property?

If a fire breaks out in your home:

- Leave the room where the fire is straight away, then close the door
- Tell everyone in your home and get them to leave, closing your front door behind you
- Do not stay to put the fire out or stop to collect belongings
- Call the fire service
- Walk outside, away from the building
- Do not use the lift.

If you see or hear of a fire in another part of the building:

- Leave immediately if smoke or heat affects your home, or if you are told to by the fire service.
- If you are in any doubt, get out.

To call the Fire Service:

- Dial **999**
- When the operator answers, give your telephone number and ask for the fire service
- When the fire service replies, give the address where the fire is, including the floor number
- Notify the fire service of any individual within your household who needs to be rescued.

Your property

12. What fire safety equipment is integrated into my flat?

Your home is fitted with a smoke detector located in your hallway. They are there for your safety. The smoke detector is wired to the main distribution board and is also fitted with a backup rechargeable battery, in case of power cuts. Test the operation of the smoke detector once every month by pressing the test button. If the unit is beeping intermittently, change/replace the battery as necessary; if this does not solve the problem consult the user manual. Refer to the instruction manual supplied at handover for details on battery change.

Your apartment is also fitted with a heat detector. The heat detector is also connected to the main distribution board with a battery back-up. Ensure you test this at least once per month.

You should speak to the members of your household now, so they know what to do in the event of an incident, including where the escape routes are. If someone in your household will need to be rescued in the event of an incident, please fill out this form on our website:

<https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/building-safety-vulnerability/>.

13. How do I report a fault with the equipment in my property?

If you are a leaseholder or a shared owner, your property is now out of its defects period. We would suggest in the first instance checking the main distribution board within your property. If the detector is beeping intermittently then it is likely the battery needs replacing.

Leaseholders must carry out battery replacements in the event the devices are beeping intermittently. For any faults you should seek guidance from a registered electrician.

If you are a tenant, SNG will undertake inspections. If you have any concerns, please let us know by contacting us on customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk or **0300 373 3000**.

14. What precautions can I take to reduce the risk of causing or being injured in a fire?

You can view fire safety tips on our website here:

<https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/advice/health-and-safety/fire-safety-top-tips/>.

We have also listed some of our top tips below:

- Make sure that the smoke alarms in your apartment are working and are regularly tested.
- Do not store anything in your hall or corridor, especially anything that will burn.
- Use the heating system within your apartment – do not use radiant heaters with a flame such as gas or paraffin, or electric bar heaters.
- Only use your rooms for their intended purposes, do not use them as storerooms or workshops.
- Avoid storing items in the cupboard that house the electrical consumer unit as doing so could cause an obstruction and potentially a fire.
- Do not leave candles unattended and ensure candles/cigarettes are always completely extinguished.

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has a home fire safety self check on their website which can be completed in 15 minutes: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/fire-and-rescue/request-a-visit-from-the-fire-service/request-a-visit-to-your-home-or-school.aspx>. If someone in your household is elderly, has a disability or other vulnerability, you can also request a home visit at the same link above

15. What can I store and keep on my balcony?

In an attempt to manage this risk, our policy is that smoking, the use of barbecues and storage of flammable property on balconies is strictly prohibited. We ask that you please:

- Remove any cooking equipment on balconies
- Remove any personal possessions including plastic plant pots
- Remove any combustible materials
- Remove any sheds, wooden or other type of storage structure, including their contents
- Always take care when disposing of smoking materials, ensuring they are fully extinguished
- Never leave lit smoking materials unattended
- Never use open flame candles on balconies.

The above is for guidance only, it is not intended to be an exhaustive list of things you can do to keep you and your neighbours safe when using your balconies. We ask that you please follow the spirit of this guidance and do everything possible to ensure that the safety of your building is kept to a high standard.

Fire doors

16. Will fire doors be inspected?

In line with the Fire Safety Act, SNG will be undertaking inspections of both flat entrance doors and communal doors. These surveys are being undertaken by Savills. You will see a QR code sticker on your door, which is used to record the condition on our system. Please do not remove this.

As part of your leases and tenancy agreements, residents are reminded not to remove the overhead closer, to ensure doors are closing within their frames and that the doors are not damaged. If you note damage to your flat entrance door you must contact our fire safety team for further advice, who can be reached on FireSafety@networkhomes.org.uk.

Interim fire strategy equipment

17. When will the alarm equipment that was previously installed be removed?

The contractor will remove the communal fire alarm equipment that was installed to support the interim strategy from 12pm on July 30. It should be noted that this will not include any of the equipment linked to the communal detection and alarm system that will be retained to support the stay put strategy.

Within resident's apartments, the heat detector will be removed at a later date.

18. When will the heat detector within my flat be removed?

In the first instance we will carry out a door knocking exercise. An operative will remove the heat detectors from your wall and make good any affected areas.

We will notify you in further communication when we require access to your property. If you don't wish to be cold called and would like to agree a specific time, please contact us to agree a time:

- Cameron Anterkyi, SNG Resident Liaison Officer
0204 512 5791
cameron.anterkyi@networkhomes.org.uk

We appreciate your continued assistance to undertake these vital works.