

## Safety in your building

13 August 2024

Townsend Mews,  
Stevenage,  
Hertfordshire,  
SG1 3BQ

Dear residents,

### Fire strategy now simultaneous evacuation, plus fire wardens from Wed 14 Aug

From 3pm on Wednesday 14 August, the fire strategy at your building will be changing from stay put to simultaneous evacuation – **if you hear an alarm sound or are told to evacuate you must leave the building immediately**. We will also be installing a ‘waking watch’, this is essentially a warden who will patrol the building every 15 minutes to look for signs of heat, smoke or flames, and provide an early warning to all residents. In addition, we intend to install a communal wide fire alarm system. After the fire alarm has been installed, the waking watch patrols will no longer be required.

We’re implementing these changes due to issues we have found within the building’s external wall system. We’ve included below further fire safety information, plus background information on why this has happened, and what the next steps are. Please take the time to read this letter as it contains important safety information.

#### Fire strategy for Townsend Mews

We are taking the following steps to support the simultaneous evacuation policy:

- Implementing a waking watch.
- Procuring a fire alarm.
- Notifying the Fire Brigade of the change in strategy.
- Changing fire notices in the communal areas.
- Gathering information on residents who may need to be rescued.

#### What should you do if there is a fire, an alarm or evacuation?

If there is a fire in your flat or the fire wardens raise an alarm by sounding an air horn, you should:

- Evacuate immediately closing all doors behind you as you leave your flat.
- Leave the building using the nearest staircase shown on the fire signage within your block. Do not use the lift.
- Call 999.
- If the fire is in your flat, you should alert the fire wardens so they can raise an alarm.
- If you are responding to an alarm raised by the fire wardens, you should follow any instructions they give you.
- Tell the fire warden and fire brigade if any members of your household need to be rescued.
- Gather at the assembly point, which is located at the entrance to Games Yard, outside the gates of Townsend Mews. Wait at the assembly point until you are told by the lead fire warden/fire brigade to return to your home.

The Hive  
22 Wembley Park  
Boulevard  
Wembley  
HA9 0HP

[www.sng.org.uk](http://www.sng.org.uk)  
[customerservice@  
networkhomes.org.uk](mailto:customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk)  
0300 373 3000

#### **A summary of this letter**

From 3pm on Wednesday 14 August, your building will have fire wardens (waking watch) patrolling the building.

#### **Safety information**

Your fire strategy will also change to simultaneous evacuation – you must leave the building immediately if you hear an alarm/airhorn or are directed to by a warden.

Please fill out the form on our website if you believe someone in your home would need to be rescued in the event of an evacuation:

[networkhomes.org.uk/  
building-safety-  
vulnerability/](http://networkhomes.org.uk/building-safety-vulnerability/)

You should familiarise yourself and your household members with the nearest fire exit.

#### **Future updates**

All future updates will be texted out and can be found on this dedicated webpage:

[networkhomes.org.uk/  
TownsendBuildingSafety](http://networkhomes.org.uk/TownsendBuildingSafety)



The location of the assembly point:



The location of the assembly point:



### **Need to be rescued?**

It's important we know if anyone in your household will need to be rescued in an emergency. Please let us know by visiting: [www.networkhomes.org.uk/building-safety-vulnerability/](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk/building-safety-vulnerability/).

Someone may need to be rescued if they have:

- Mobility issues
- Visual/Hearing impairment
- Large family unit
- Elderly relatives
- Young children.

We will collect this information so that we can ensure you and/or the members of your household can be evacuated safely in case of an emergency. This information will also be shared with the London Fire Brigade and the fire warden. We will keep this information for the duration of your tenancy/lease.

### **General fire safety information**

It's really important that everyone in the building is vigilant in preventing a fire incident. We have included some top tips, plus some links to more information which you may find useful:

- Talk to all members of your household, including children, about how to get out of the building in an emergency – look up the appropriate exit as soon as possible.
- Ensure no items are stored in communal areas and escape routes are clear.
- Go to the Herts Fire and Rescue website, which has a free online tool which guides you through a fire risk assessment of your home (home visits are available for more vulnerable residents): <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>.
- View resources which may help: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/buildingsafetyresources/>
- Remind yourself of our top fire safety tips: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/advice/health-and-safety/fire-safety-top-tips/>
- We understand building safety works can be frustrating and take time to resolve, however we ask that you still treat our staff with respect as they are trying to get the issues at your building fixed. You can read more about how we want to respect each other in our service charter: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/your-home/service-charter/>

### **Background**

I wanted to provide you with some information regarding why it has taken some time to get to this point where we are installing a waking watch:

- June 2023: The fire engineer investigated the external wall system at Townsend Mews
- August 2023: We received their report into the findings. We had some questions regarding the findings of the report and went back to the fire engineering firm for more information.
- August 2023 – June 2024: We received several drafts of the report, and we had further questions which eventually resulted in the need for a further on-site inspection.
- July 2024: Additional inspection
- August 2024: We received the final report and have now accepted the findings. These findings from the additional inspection have directed us to change the fire strategy and outlines the need to have a waking watch at your building.

We're not satisfied with the length of time it has taken from the initial investigation to the change in fire strategy and will be reviewing the process with the fire engineer to look for ways to improve.



**Next steps**

There are two different government funds which we may be eligible to receive support from. First is the Waking Watch Relief Fund (WWRF) which can help pay for the installation of a fire alarm system, and will then see the removal of a waking watch. And second is the Cladding Safety Scheme, which can pay for some external wall remediation issues in buildings below 18 metres. We have received funding from both funds before for other buildings, but will need to see if we are eligible for this building as each one is different.

We'll be working hard to organise the installation of a new fire alarm system as quickly as possible, so as to reduce the amount of time a waking watch is required. Once we have confirmed any information such as installation dates we will write to you again.

**Keeping up to date with the latest information**

We text out updates to residents – if you don't receive text messages from SNG or don't think your contact details are up to date, please get in touch with us at [customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk](mailto:customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk). Around your building we will place QR code posters, which will lead to a dedicated webpage which will include all the latest updates regarding your building. We work on a three-month update basis, so you can expect to hear from us every three months or sooner if we have something confirmed which we need to tell you. You can visit the page at [www.networkhomes.org.uk/TownsendBuildingSafety](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk/TownsendBuildingSafety).

I'd like to thank you all for your patience in this matter, as it has taken some time to get to this point. If you have any questions, please get in touch with us on [customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk](mailto:customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk).

Kind regards

Raj Gandecha  
Head of Resident Management (Building Safety)