

**Why can't I keep my  
bicycle, pushchair, plant pot  
stand or any personal item,  
in the common way of my  
block of flats**

**FIRE REGULATIONS**

In most situations the stairs and landings of a block of flats are the means of escape to safety in the event of a fire within the building. Your landlord (or his managing agent) has a duty of care towards the safety of residents in the building. By the nature of their control of the building as owner or manager, they are known as "the Responsible person". Failure of the responsible person to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the residents in a building for which he is "the responsible Person" may result in a hefty fine or even imprisonment in the event that someone dies in a fire as the result of failure of the "responsible person" to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of occupants of the building. "The Responsible Person" may face a charge of corporate manslaughter.

That is why your managing agent is so strict on this issue.

### **3 WAYS THAT SOME HAVE REASOND REGARDING USE OF THE COMMON WAY**

1. *“I live on the top floor and I have 2 children. It is unreasonable that my landlord expects me to carry my pushchair and 2 children all the way up the stairs and anyway, it is tucked close to the wall. I spoke to the neighbours and they don’t mind”*
2. *I need my bicycle to get to work on time. The flat is small. I can’t be expected to lug my bicycle up the stairs or keep it in the flat. It is unreasonable of the managing agent to expect this.*
3. *I cannot see that my pushchair/bicycle presents much of a risk!*

## **PURHAPS THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOUR REASONING! HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THIS ISSUE FROM A DIFFERENT VIEWPOINT?**

Why did you move into a small flat or flat on the top floor knowing that you would have this difficulty? Do you think that this was sound judgement? Many blocks of flats do not have space to provide bicycle or pushchair storage in the common parts. Now that you have moved into the property you are expecting everyone else to ignore fire safety regulations to accommodate your needs. Who really is the unreasonable one here?

Does it seem right to you that the “Responsible person” for fire safety may face prosecution simply because you decided to move to a flat where it is impractical for you to live.

Does it seem right to you that others in the building should be put at risk of injury by your actions? If you have reasoned as described above in paragraph c) and cannot see why you may be creating a risk of harm to others. Please consider the following scenario:-

A man/woman/child is awoken in the middle of the night by the sound of the communal fire alarm. Sitting up abruptly in a half-awake state the person can smell smoke and immediately becomes frightened. The power in the building has failed and the lights in the flat fail to work when they fumble for the switch. The person now begins to panic they can hear people shouting as they manage to open the door onto the staircase (THE

FIRE EXIT) the stair enclosure is full of smoke, so much that it is obscuring the light from the emergency lighting, it is impossible to see. Somehow they make it to the stairs. By now they are choking they cannot breath and feel dizzy. In a state of frightened panic They run blindly screaming, they become disoriented. In this confused state, unable to see in front of them they run into an obstruction in the hall. Falling over, they knock their head on something and become concussed or unconscious.

The chances of this person escaping are zero. It is likely that they will die of smoke inhalation long before they are in any danger from being burned by the fire.

In a situation like this, seconds can make the difference between survival or death. Do you think your neighbours who politely said they don't mind your belongings in the hall have considered a scenario like this?

Courtesy of the BBC news website

## **Dozens died in fires in 2010 'despite fire alarms'**



More than 80% of buildings now have smoke alarms fitted

**Nearly half of fire deaths in buildings in 2010 happened in a property with a working smoke alarm, figures obtained by BBC Radio 5 live Breakfast show.**

The deaths accounted for 157 of the 340 people killed in UK property fires.

The figures were obtained through Freedom of Information requests from 54 out of 57 fire services.

More than 80% of buildings now have smoke alarms fitted.

But people often disable them if they are faulty and go off too frequently or they forget to replace the batteries.

In many cases where deaths occurred last year, even though there was a working fire alarm, escape routes had not been planned or exits were blocked.