

Flues Concealed in Voids, Walls or Ceilings – Take Urgent Action Now!

This is Important advice for Landlords and Tenants who have flues which run in voids, walls and ceiling spaces. If you live, own or are a landlord for one of these homes then please read on for more information so you know what to do.

Some properties, mainly flats and apartments, have been built with boiler flues which cannot be inspected because they are hidden behind walls or ceilings. The boiler flues that this information relates to are connected to room-sealed fan assisted boilers.

Gas Safe registered engineers need to be able to see the flue – which take fumes away from the boiler – as part of essential safety checks whenever the boiler is worked on. A flue in poor condition, combined with a boiler that is not working properly, could put you and the occupants in danger from carbon monoxide poisoning, which can cause death or serious injury.

If your boiler is situated on an outside wall, it is unlikely you have this type of flue. Alternatively, if your engineer can see all of the flue, you will not need to take any further action in relation to this matter.

If you do have a boiler where all, or part of, the flue cannot be seen, you, or your landlord, will need to arrange for inspection hatches to be fitted. **This does not mean that your flue system is suddenly unsafe.** As long as the boiler passes a series of safety checks – including having audible carbon monoxide alarms fitted – it can be used normally for the time being.

Carbon monoxide alarms are not an alternative to being able to see the flue and you will still need to have inspection hatches fitted. You have until **31 December 2012** for this work to be completed. It is recommended that inspection hatches are fitted as soon as you are able to do so. From **1 January 2013**, any Gas Safe registered engineer will turn the boiler off, with your permission and formally advise you not to use it until inspection hatches have been fitted in appropriate places.

Although most of the affected boiler and flue systems are relatively new (installed since 2000), the risk of faults leading to the release of carbon monoxide increases as the system gets older, especially if it is not serviced regularly. It is important that you have your gas appliances serviced annually.

You need to take action now

If your property is let and managed by John Shepherd Lettings and your property may be fitted with a flue which is concealed, contact Property Management on 0121 321 1313 or your local branch via the website www.johnshepherdlettings.com.

If your property is not managed by John Shepherd Lettings and is less than two years old, contact your builder. If your property is between two and ten years old contact your home warranty provider, as you may be covered by them if there are defects in the flue. A list of the main home warranty providers is shown below. If your property is 10 years or older you should contact a Gas Safe registered engineer.

If you are a John Shepherd Lettings tenant contact Property Management on 0121 321 1313. It is the responsibility of your landlord to ensure that inspection hatches are installed and that the boiler and flue are checked every year.

For any additional enquiries, please email your property manager.

This advice has been developed by the Flues in Voids cross-industry team. It is made up of representatives of Gas Safe Register, house builders, home warranty providers, registered gas engineers, appliance manufacturers (including HHIC) and others and assisted by HSE, to provide clear communication to industry and consumers around the issue of flues being located in voids which do not allow inspection.

Richard Crathorne – John Shepherd Lettings