

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Housing and Environment	DATE 13 April 2010
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard	
TITLE OF REPORT	Gas Safety Management – Access for Annual Gas Safety Checks	
REPORT NUMBER:	H&E/10/050	

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report outlines the Council's legal obligations for the management of gas safety and recommends the introduction of an administrative charge and other measures for tenants who do not allow access.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Housing and Environment Committee agree that:

- a) An administrative charge of £120 should be made to tenants who do not allow access for the annual gas service/safety check until the Council has scheduled forced entry;
- b) The charge will be reviewed on an annual basis
- c) Hibernation devices are fitted to properties where the same tenant has reached the forced entry stage
- d) The Council will use all available means to publicise to tenants the importance of allowing access for the annual gas service/safety check.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the report

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

This report links to the Community Plan, the Single Outcome Agreement and Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking by ensuring that our properties are safe to live in and the our tenants and their neighbours are living in a safer environment.

## 5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.
- 5.2 There are no direct personnel or resources implications arising from the report,
- 5.3 There is no direct property implications arising from the report

## 6. REPORT

### 6.1 Annual Safety Check for Domestic Properties

- 6.1.1 There are approximately 17000 houses heated by gas throughout Aberdeen City Council.
- 6.1.2 The annual programme for servicing/safety checks is agreed between the Council and the gas servicing contractor. The contractor starts the annual service/safety check process two months before the annual safety check is due by writing to the tenant giving approximately 2 weeks notice of the proposed date of visit. Tenants are asked to contact the contractor to arrange an alternative time if this is not convenient.
- 6.1.3 If the contractor cannot get access to the house, a card is left asking the tenant to contact the contractor either by returning the card or by phoning to arrange a mutually convenient time. If the contractor can still not gain access, the visit is re-programmed and the tenant is advised in writing of the time that the servicing/safety check will be carried out.
- 6.1.4 If all the attempts by the contractor to gain access are unsuccessful, the Council takes over trying to gain access by arranging a visit by a member of staff. During this period checks are also made that the tenant is not venerable in any way or requires assistance to enable them to deal with the servicing/safety check visit. If this is the case then appropriate assistance is sought from a relative or carer. If the five attempts by the contractor and the Council to gain access to fail, action is taken to schedule forced entry to the house in respect of the landlords repairing obligations set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- 6.1.5 In practice, tenants generally allow access at this stage and the forced entry does not have to be implemented though there are considerable

recourses involved including the attendance of the gas servicing contractor, a joiner and a housing management officer. Forced entry was scheduled for 520 properties between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 although of these only 72 actual forced entries took place because tenants permitted access on the day. The resources involved in this action are additional to the resources already employed in the correspondence and visits that lead up to the forced entry action.

## 6.2 Gas safety management performance

6.2.1 With management in put from both contractor and the Council, performance on achieving the annual service/safety check within 12 months is generally good and at the beginning of March 2009 88% of houses had been serviced/safety checked within the year. A total of 98% of properties had a certificate.

6.2.2 In order to improve performance and particularly to encourage tenants to allow access to their homes much earlier in the gas servicing/safety check process, it is proposed that an administrative charge of £120 should be introduced that is payable by all tenants who reach the forced entry stage. This amount will be charged even if the tenant allows entry at this stage. The charge will be reviewed along with other rechargeable repair costs on an annual basis.

6.2.3.1 The proposed administration charge is made up of the following components:

Hourly rate for joiner

High priority timescale additional payment

Hourly rate for gas servicing contractor

Cost of standard lock

Administration costs of additional letters, phone calls, and visits

6.2.4 As a further measure to assist performance improvement, it is proposed that gas hibernation devices should be fitted to the gas heating system controls where the Council has reached the forced entry stage. These devices are programmed to switch off the heating at the date when the gas safety certificate expires though a limited amount of heat can be allowed per day. If the tenant allows access before the expiry date of the gas safety certificate the device will not be activated.

6.2.5 As well as receiving notification about the servicing/safety check visit to their house each year, tenants are kept informed generally about the Council's obligations to carry out annual gas service/safety check through a number of mechanisms; their tenancy agreement, new tenancy interview; repairs book and home safety leaflet. There are also regular articles in the Tenants Newsletter advising of the importance of allowing access for the annual gas service/safety check. It is proposed that these mechanisms should all continue to be used to highlight the importance of allowing access to ensure that gas installations are

maintained in a safe condition and the Council's legal obligations are met.

## 7. AUTHORISED SIGNATURE

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## 8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Not Applicable