



# PRESS RELEASE

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## FAULTY WASHING MACHINE CAUSES BELFAST FIRE

**Middlesex, January 2005** – A recent house fire in Belfast, caused by a faulty washing machine, prompted managing agent Alan McCleary to write to all his owners with a 'This could be your house' photograph. As a result, they've all agreed to have appliances and sockets in their rented properties electrically tested by *gas-elec* Northern Ireland.

It was just at the start of the New Year when Alan McCleary got an early evening call on his mobile from his wife, telling him that one of his managed properties was on fire. The owner, who lived 30 miles away, had been alerted by a Belfast neighbour and had called Alan's home for help. Could Alan, who lived much nearer, please go and find out what was happening?

By the time Alan arrived at the property the fire brigade had gone, leaving behind an uninhabitable soaked and blackened house and a tenant in tears. Alan was staggered by the damage but relieved the tenant and her family were unharmed. Had they been asleep in bed, it could have ended in tragedy.

The seat of the fire was under the stairs, where the landlord-supplied washing machine was plugged in and 'on' but not in use. The tenant and her family were in the sitting room, watching television, when out of the corner of her eye she became aware of a flickering orange pattern. When she looked, to her horror she saw flames running silently and rapidly along the ceiling! Under the stairs, just 20 feet from where she was sitting, the fire had got a real hold. She and her family ran out of the house and a neighbour called the fire brigade. They lost virtually everything, but at least they were unharmed.

The tenant has since had to find accommodation with her family and it will be six months before the house is habitable again. The experience spurred Alan McCleary

into contacting gas-*elec* NI manager Aiden O'Callaghan, who had been talking to him about safety inspections.

"Nearly all our houses have supplied washing machines," says Alan. "The fire could have been a lot worse, but it was bad enough. I'm not going through this again!"

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### **Editor's Notes**

Founded in 1996, **gas-*elec*** carries out impartial safety inspections and light remedial works. Its unique inspection service provides the residential lettings market with multiple inspections of the gas and electrics in just one visit. **gas-*elec*** has over 126 franchisees operating from 18 regional offices, who this year will carry out more than 120,000 safety inspections in domestic properties throughout the UK. For more information visit [www.gas-elec.co.uk](http://www.gas-elec.co.uk).

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