



PRESS RELEASE

DO STUDENTS ONLY SCORE THIRD CLASS FOR SAFETY?

Middlesex, September 2006 – Tens of thousands of university students are about to leave the comforts of home to go into rented housing for the first time. But how safe will they be? Although legislation has done much to turn around the safety horrors caused by unscrupulous landlords, many of them could be still be getting 'third class' safety unless parents are vigilant.

As the last thing on a student's mind in fresher's week will be household safety, it's usually down to the parents to look after such 'boring' details.

"If you take sensible precautions, and use reputable landlords or letting agents, you can minimise the risks," says John Davidson, managing director of *gas-elec* the independent gas and electrical safety inspection company. *gas-elec*, which carries out over 100,000 impartial safety inspections every year, says its top tips for safety awareness are:

1. Landlords are legally responsible for making sure all gas installations, appliances and flues are in safe working order. An annual gas safety check is compulsory and must have been carried out by a Corgi registered installer. Ask to see the current certificate.
2. Landlords should have good reason to believe that the electrical supply, equipment and appliances are safe, rather than simply no reason to believe that any are dangerous. The only way to do this is to have them checked. Ask what and when the electricians were last tested and to see any certificates.
3. A responsible landlord will have installed one or more smoke alarms. Check that they are working by pressing the red button.
4. A really responsible landlord will also have installed a Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector. CO is commonly known as the silent killer and is potentially lethal. Watch out for yellow or brown staining around appliances, pilot lights which

frequently blow out and increased condensation around windows. gas-*elec* recently identified faulty boiler installations were allowing CO to seep back into 30 flats out of a block of 60.

5. If you're taking electrical appliances with you, check that this is permitted by the landlord, and that they are in good working order. Don't be tempted to save money by buying or taking old appliances that may not be safe. Some recent gas-*elec* inspections have shown a toaster that the tenant had rewired himself but in reverse; a dangerous old satellite digi-box; and then there was the faulty washing machine that burst into flames and gutted the house. The letting agent called gas-*elec* to inspect all his other properties after that!
6. The Fire and Furnishing Regulations require that all soft furnishings must be fire retardant and carry labels to that effect. Check to see the labels are in place. This means anything which is upholstered or has a filling including mattresses, pillows, padded headboards, cushions sofas armchairs. Carpets, curtains and duvets are principal items excluded.
7. Again a really responsible landlord will have supplied some fire safety equipment such as a fire blanket and fire extinguisher. Check it is in good condition, or buy a new one.
8. Are there enough sockets in the house? Students' stereos, TVs and computers are a great temptation to overload the circuits. A gas-*elec* inspector recently reported a faulty three-way plug in one socket that had caused extensive fire and smoke damage throughout the house.
9. Is there a new style consumer control unit (CCU) with circuit breakers, to isolate potential problems, as a proper protective measure? Old rewirable fuses and wooden back boards are a sure sign that the wiring has not recently been updated.
10. Carry out a visual check for any outward signs that all might not be well – cracked or burnt sockets, loose or frayed wiring, cables hanging over fires or hobs are some obvious signs that a lay person can spot. Any of these will need immediate attention and may indicate more serious problems.

Finally even new houses or new installations have shown to be faulty when inspected by a "competent" person or firm, as required by the newly enforced Part P of the building regulations. If you see anything that you are not happy with, say gas-*elec*, don't be afraid to contact your landlord or the letting agent and ask to get it checked by a reputable safety inspection company. Most landlords will respond well; it is in

their interest, after all, to keep the property in safe working order. And your children's lives may depend on it.

For details of *gas-elec*'s independent gas, electrical, fire and other testing services visit www.gas-elec.co.uk, or ring 0800 587 9999.

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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.

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