



Tenant Fact Sheet: January 2008 Immersion Heaters and Heating Systems

Many Mid Devon District Council tenants will have been shocked to hear about the tragic death of a child in a property owned by Taunton Deane District Council. The death occurred as a result of a severe scalding incident.

A number of experts have been looking at the reasons why this terrible accident occurred and it appears that different factors contributed to the incident including the failure of the thermostat in the heating system at the property. An inquest into the death will be held later this year.

We are aware of how concerned the public are about this incident and that you want to know what the Mid Devon District Council is doing to safeguard its tenants. This fact sheet will give you information about how we are responding and useful guidance about what you can do to make sure such an incident does not occur in your home.

What is the Council doing?

Since the date of the accident, the Council has considered advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The Council is taking steps to make sure that a similar incident cannot occur in the future in Mid Devon.

We intend to:

- Inspect and replace where necessary, all thermostats in affected Council properties with a new “dual rod” thermostat system. This new system will stop the water in your cold-water cistern from heating if the immersion rod fails. You will therefore be alerted to any failure of your thermostat, as you will not have hot water or heating. This inspection and replacement programme will be completed by the end of March 2009.
- Inspect all cold-water storage cisterns in roof spaces by the end of March 2012 to make sure they are properly installed.
- In addition, our electricians and plumbers visiting Council homes on routine repair visits will carry out inspections and replace thermostats where required.

We would emphasise that the risk of such an accident occurring again is extremely low. The odds are millions to one. The Health and Safety Executive have accepted that our inspection and replacement programme (and the timescale for completing it) is an appropriate reaction to this situation.

Important Safety Information

If you have any concerns about your heating system, there are extremely simple ways to identify if a problem might exist. Examples might arise where:

- 1) There is an unexpected rise in the temperature of your hot water
- 2) There is warm or hot water coming out of your cold water taps
- 3) You hear any unusual noises from your heating system including banging or bubbling.

In the event that you experience any of these problems, you should immediately turn off the immersion heater using the switch that is located near the hot water cylinder in the your cupboard.

Next, report the fault to the Council using the following telephone numbers:

During normal working hours, call: **0800 023 2281**.

At all other times call our emergency call centre: **01884 255255**

Before visiting your home we will check our records for information on the type of hot water heating system installed in your property. This may confirm that you are not at risk and you have a different problem.

If you have an electric immersion heater to heat your hot water and the water fails to heat, then you are not at risk, but you should still turn off the immersion heater and contact the Council as above. If you have an electric immersion heater to heat your hot water and the system is operating normally, you do not need to do anything as the Council will visit and inspect the thermostat within the next 12 months.

Any more questions?

If you have any remaining concerns about this issue, please contact the Council on the following number 0800 0232281 and we will do our best to address your concerns.

If you would like this document translated into other languages or in Braille, large print, audio tape, or CD please telephone us on 01884 234295 or email us at: htenancy@mid Devon.gov.uk