



Retrofit Sprinkler programme

Petticoat Tower Q&As May 2022



Prior to installation

- **What are the benefits to residents' home?**

The purpose of the work is to reduce the impact of a fire by keeping residents and their home as safe as possible.

- **Can the City of London Corporation highlight the rights that residents (either tenants or leaseholders) have in terms of accepting this installation, so that it is possible for individuals to give their informed consent to the works?**

Residents are always advised to obtain their own impartial legal advice. The City of London Corporation's position regarding gaining access to tenanted households is set out by the relevant terms contained within the tenancy agreement as well as terms implied by statute. Leaseholders are required to give access under the relevant terms of their lease.

- **Can the City Corporation share more details of the show flat?**

United Living are currently installing a sprinkler system in the show flat on Petticoat Tower. It is anticipated that the show flat will be available for viewings by appointment from the week beginning 13th of June 2022. This will serve as a 'show installation' where residents will be able to view and consider the finished sprinkler product. A member of the project team will also be available on site to answer questions and provide support where required.

- **Why do residents need a pre-condition survey? What if residents have a combined/kitchen/living room space?**

A pre-condition survey is carried out by United Living to ensure that there is a clear record of the condition of residents' property before work commences. This will also identify any issues that may affect the installation and ensure that the layout of the property is known for pipe work installation.

If residents have an open plan living and kitchen space this will be fitted with appropriate sprinklers as required. This is the reason why the pre-works surveys are carried out i.e. to assess each individual dwelling for the most appropriate installation.

- **Details of Smoke Alarm Arrangement – Does every room need to have a smoke alarm fitted?**

Smoke detection devices will be fitted to every habitable room and hallway throughout Petticoat Tower, including cupboards, which have been deemed a potential source of ignition. Bathrooms will not be fitted with a smoke alarm. Kitchens will be fitted with heat detection alarms. This is to ensure that the City Corporation complies with Building Safety Regulations BS 5839-6 (domestic smoke detection) and BS 9251 2021 (sprinklers).

- **Will residents have to move their furniture or put it into storage?**

Residents will not be required to put their furniture into storage. During the City Corporation survey inspection process, they will identify if any furniture needs to be moved and when United Living starts work in a resident's home, if any items require moving, United Living will assist with this.

- **Will residents have to be at home while the works are being carried out?**

Appointments made to undertake this work would be agreed in advance with residents. There may be occasions when a resident does not want to be in their home whilst the work is being undertaken. Where it is more convenient for a resident to be away from their home during the installation process, a respite centre is being established where residents can visit during the day when the works are being carried out. If residents have to be at work whilst the work is being carried out, there are a number of arrangements that can be made for access to a resident's home with their agreement. United Living's Resident Liaison Officer will give residents advanced notice of the works and will discuss options with residents concerned.

- **What will the City Corporation do in the case of asbestos identified within households?**

The City Corporation will be carrying out an asbestos survey in every home to ensure that if asbestos is present, the appropriate measures are put in place to safely manage it and undertake appropriate works accordingly.

Installation

- **How long will the works take to complete one flat?**

United Living believe that the installation of the sprinkler system pipe work, boxing-in the pipe work and installing a new alarm will take approximately 3 days per property to complete if there are no access problems.

- **How will the United Living take care of residents' belongings whilst works are underway?**

Before the United Living start work, they will meet with residents and identify any concerns that residents may have regarding their personal belongings and any delicate items they may have. Unfortunately, there will be an element of dust and every care will be taken to protect residents' belongings while work is being carried out in residents' homes.

- **What visual changes are to be expected?**

Every effort will be made to ensure residents' decorations are unaffected where the pipe work has been installed. United Living are currently installing a sprinkler system in a show flat where residents will be able to visit to see how the pipe work to the system has been installed. The pipes will be installed at a high level and boxed in to cover the new pipework and immediate area. The only visible part of the system will be the sprinkler heads.

- **Will the sprinklers use the same piping currently in the communal areas?**

No. The sprinkler pipework will be separate from the current pipe work located within the communal area. The current pipework in the communal area is for the new communal heating system for the block and is a separate project with separate pipework to the sprinkler system.

- **Are sprinkler heads connected to a larger fire safety system?**

The sprinkler heads and sprinkler plant are independent of the fire alarm system, but the fire alarm panel located centrally in the common parts will know which sprinkler head has been activated. The sprinkler system will signal to the alarm panel which will alert emergency services.

- **How do the sprinkler systems work and what sets them off?**

Sprinkler systems are heat activated rather than smoke activated, in the event of a fire the sprinkler plate will be triggered at about 57°C. There is a fused metal link within the sprinkler head, at approximately 71°C – 74 °C the metal link will melt and release a spray of water. The water sprays at a fine range to either extinguish the fire or control the fire in the affected area. Sprinkler heads do not detect smoke, they are only triggered by sustained heat from a fire. They will not be set off if residents burn the toast. Sprinkler heads would only go off if there is a fire in that particular room.

- **Residents were not aware that Petticoat Tower has a central block panel. Do smoke alarms need to be upgraded and linked to the building alarm?**

Under this scheme additional smoke detectors will be installed within dwellings. Activation of a smoke detector will send a signal to the new fire panel. The fire panel will be connected to a monitoring centre and the Fire Brigade will be notified and called out.

In the event of an accidental activation e.g. burning toast, there will be a hush button facility in each flat so the Fire Brigade will not be called. When the Fire Brigade arrive, the panel will tell them the location of the fire and if necessary, they will be able to evacuate occupants on a floor by floor basis as they think fit by sounding alarms on those floors.

- **Will sprinklers be installed on balconies at Petticoat Tower?**

Sprinklers will not be installed on balconies across Petticoat Tower.

- **Will there be noise from introducing a new ground Floor plant room?**

There will be moderate noise during the construction phase of plant room build, however this will be limited to the working hours of 8am-5pm. Once built, the plantroom is a new enclosure with a roof, located near the existing plant room. There should be no major concerns regarding noise disruptions whilst the system is running.

- **Will there be noise from the water pressure within pipes? Even when not activated?**

There should be little or no noise.

Concerns

- **What happens if it goes wrong once the project is completed?**

Once the sprinkler system has been installed, it will be inspected on an annual basis.

- **What should residents do if there is a fault with the sprinkler?**

If residents believe there is a fault with the sprinkler system during installation, please contact your Resident Liaison Officer on 0800 023 1750.

- **What is the likeness of receiving electric shock whilst sprinklers are activated within households? What would be the result of standing in electrified water?**

This is extremely unlikely. Sprinkler heads will only activate if there is a fire in the immediate vicinity of that sprinkler head location. The sprinklers located in other rooms will not activate unless fire spreads to those rooms as well. Unless someone is in the actual room where the fire is situated, they will not be exposed to the water discharge. Smoke and heat detectors will be activated prior to the sprinkler activation, so if anyone is in occupation, they would have received early warning of a fire, and they would be advised to leave the flat. Should a fire occur, residents should leave and let the sprinkler extinguish/contain the fire. Sprinklers are designed to contain the fire until the Fire Brigade arrive, who will then take measures to deal with it further.

- **Is City Corporation aware of the communal heating pipework? Do they know of any conflict/overlap between these programmes?**

The City Corporation has a coordinated approach to repairs and major works being delivered on its estates. The Project manager for the Sprinkler project is working closely with the other teams who are undertaking work at Petticoat Tower. Regular meetings are taking place to ensure that all project leads are aware of key issues for effective project delivery and to minimise unnecessary disruption to residents of Petticoat Tower.

Regular Inspections & Testing

- **Equipment inspection - What will this visual inspection prove? How can this happen by looking at a box on the ceiling?**

The sprinkler system comprises a central tank linked to several pumps, valves, pipework and sprinkler heads. The pumps and tank unit are monitored and self-tested at intervals in addition to an annual maintenance programme. Any problems are reported back immediately to a messaging centre by autodial. The sprinkler heads themselves require a visual inspection to ensure that the cover plate is free to release in the event of a fire. This inspection will be carried out annually.

- **What assurances can City Corporation give residents regarding the testing of this system post completion? Residents have concerns regarding maintenance of other equipment within the block.**

There is a 2-stage procedure to test the installation to each flat, firstly this is tested with air to check for any obvious issues in the system, secondly the newly installed pipe work is filled with water and monitored for an hour to ensure there are no leaks present. There are also annual checks to check that there has been no damage to the sprinkler heads.

The sprinkler tank and pumps are continuously monitored and self-test. In addition, there is an annual maintenance check.

Regulations & Insurance Cover

- **What are the legal safety requirements and what has been the basis for the selection of blocks to have sprinklers fitted?**

Following a meeting on 11th May 2018, the Community & Children's Services Committee agreed a proposal from its Director for the retrofitting of automatic water sprinkler system in five of its social housing high-rise tower blocks in the City Corporation's housing portfolio; this included Petticoat Tower. This recommendation was based on an assessment of potential risk in relation to the impact and effect of fire in our high-rise blocks, as well as limitations and improvements identified in the Fire Risk Assessments.

- **What effect will the newly fitted sprinklers have towards the buildings Fire Evacuation Strategy?**

Communication of the fire evacuation strategy to residents is a high priority for the City Corporation. Please accept this as confirmation that there is a stay-put strategy employed throughout the residents' block. This instruction provides direction to all residents to stay in their property in the event of a fire in someone else's flat/common parts.

If a sprinkler head is activated in a resident's own flat, this means that the fire is in the flat and the instruction is to leave the flat where directly affected by fire or smoke. Residents should refer to their local housing management officers should they require further information on this approach.

- **Insurance cover - In the event of sprinklers being activated whose responsibility is it to cover costs to replace or repair damaged items?**

The City Corporation's Building Insurance includes cover for damage to the building (including permanent fixtures and fittings) arising from accidental escape of water, including sprinkler leakage. The personal contents, fixtures, and fittings belonging to leaseholders and/or residents are not insured under the City Corporation's insurance, however it is recommended that leaseholders and residents take out their own contents' insurance. If a leaseholder or resident believes that they have suffered damage, loss, or injury because of the negligence of the City, they can submit a claim against the City Corporation. Claims will be considered under the City Corporation's public liability insurance policy based on the principle that legal liability and compensation is not an automatic right. Although the activation of a sprinkler is not in itself evidence of negligence, each claim would need to be considered on its own merits given the specific set of circumstances leading to the loss.

General questions

- **What should residents do if they still have damage to their property caused by previous works?**

The City Corporation would like to apologise for any delays experienced whilst reporting a repair and its completion. If there are any outstanding repairs that the City Corporation is responsible for carrying out, please contact the City of Corporation's Report a Repair line on 0800 035 003 or email propertyservices@cityoflondon.gov.uk

- **Why sprinklers are not being installed in the Barbican, why just in blocks with social housing? Doesn't the City Corporation have the same responsibility to its residents in the Barbican?**

The City Corporation does have the same responsibility to residents in the Barbican. The tower blocks on the Barbican Estate are different in construction to those on our social housing estates and, at the time, the members took the view that the potential risk in relation to the impact and effect of fire did not merit the installation of sprinklers to the towers in the Barbican.

- **What information has been shared with residents following the webinar?**

Due to the technical nature of some of the questions, it has unfortunately taken longer than the City Corporation hoped to provide responses to some of the questions that were not answered during the meeting with residents. A response to the outstanding questions will be distributed to all residents by Friday 27th May.

A copy of the presentation notes as well as written notes of the meeting have already been circulated to all residents in the Petticoat Tower.

Useful contact details

- **Where can residents gain more information about the project or wider works being done across our estate?**

Routine updates regarding all projects taking place across Middlesex Street estate (including Retrofit Sprinklers programme) can be found via URL:

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/housing/major-works-programme

United Living

Contracted **Resident Liaison Officers** will be present across site once United Living have started works (provisional start date: Late Summer 2022). This facility will provide direct relief with resident questions and site-based support.

Resident Liaison Officer: 0800 023 1750 or 07720 808 838

Monday - Friday, between 8.30am - 5.30pm.

Alternatively, please email CofLenquiries@unitedliving.co.uk

- Monthly newsletters will also be circulated to households once groundworks have commenced.

For all other queries regarding this project, please contact PPCR

Office 020 7407 7452; Freephone 0800 217 066 or email info@ppcr.org.uk