# Private Sector Housing Hazard Fact Sheet
# EXCESS COLD

**Who we are and what we do:**

Private Sector Housing are responsible for making sure that properties both owner occupied and privately rented comply with Housing law and standards to protect customers from hazards of poor housing.

To achieve this we will assess dwellings under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to evaluate any potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies found. The more common hazards that we come across in dwellings are damp and mould growth; **excess cold**; crowding and space; entry by intruders; personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage; falling on the level; falling on stairs; falling between levels**;** fire**;** and structural collapse and falling elements. If significant hazards are identified in privately rented properties which are attributable to the condition of the property, then we may require remedial action by landlords to reduce or eliminate the risk from these hazards.

The intention of our fact sheets is to help you understand what we are looking for, and where possible, to identify areas where landlords and tenants may be able to help minimise or reduce risk.

**Health Effects**

This fact sheet covers the threats to health associated with excessively cold indoor temperatures. The elderly are most at risk although excess cold may also affect those with weakened immune systems and small children. Excess cold can increase the effects of existing cardiovascular conditions, and contributes towards more than half the excess winter deaths and serious respiratory diseases.

In addition to the health implications, excess cold can also cause; damage to water supply pipes through freezing, damage to wall, floor, and ceiling finishes through water leaks, contribute towards damp and mould growth.

**Contributory factors to excess cold**

The danger of excess cold is greatest in older properties or those of a non-standard construction with low energy efficiency ratings. The energy efficiency of a property depends on the thermal insulating properties, on the fuel type, and the size and design of the heating and ventilation.

The age, style, size, layout and construction of a property – for example a large, uninsulated, 19th century detached property will be harder, and costlier, to heat than a modern, mid-terrace, small house with insulation up to current standards.

The location of the property – a property in an exposed countryside setting will need to be heated more than a sheltered, urban property.

The life-style of the occupants – any heating system in a property occupied by persons who are out at work all day, is likely to be used less than that where there is someone at home all day.

Any disrepair to the structure or the heating system will contribute toward excess cold. As water readily conducts heat, excess moisture content (dampness) of the structure will also affect a dwellings ability to maintain a healthy indoor temperature.

**What preventative measures can landlords and home owners take?**

Provide safe and suitable space heating in your property with timer and temperature controls. It should be appropriate to the design, layout and construction of the property so that the whole of the dwelling can be adequately and efficiently heated. You should ensure that tenants understand how to use the heating system in your property.

Ensure your property has suitable cavity wall and loft insulation to minimise heat loss from the property.

Provide suitable low level background ventilation to the property without excessive heat loss or draughts. Ensure that your tenants understand how to use fans and open the windows. Ensure that existing air vents are not blocked, or decorated over, and that trickle vents on windows and doors work correctly.

**What preventative measures can tenants and owner occupiers take?**

It is better to have a medium-to-low heat level throughout the property for longer periods of time as, in time; this will raise the temperature of the walls in the property. With thermostat controlled and timer operated central heating systems this is relatively easy to set up. With other systems remember, it is better to have them on for a longer period, but at a lower temperature, even if the occupants are out. The temperature in individual rooms can be boosted as, and when, needed. This results in less fluctuation in temperature when the heating turns off.

**Useful contacts and sources:**

Website: http://www.colchester.gov.uk/privatesectorhousing - Private Sector Housing pages for Homeowners, Landlords and tenants

Building Regulation *Approved Document L1: Conservation of fuel and power in dwellings,* and *Approved Document F: Ventilation of buildings.*

Government Warmfront Scheme Website: homeheatingguide.co.uk/warmfront-grants.html

Energy Saving Trust Website: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk Tel: 0300 123 1234


**Private Sector Housing**

**Colchester Borough Council**
Rowan House, 33 Sheepen Road, Colchester CO3 3WG
Telephone: Customer Service Centre on 01206 282581 and select Option 6
Fax: 01206 282598
Email: housing.private@colchester.gov.uk