



Private Sector Housing Hazard Fact Sheet

FALLING BETWEEN LEVELS



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 hazards associated with falling between levels where the change in level is greater than 300mm. This may include falls out of windows; falls from balconies or landings; falls from accessible roofs; falls into basement wells and over garden retaining walls.

Children under the age of five are most likely to fall between levels and boys are more likely to fall than girls. Falls can result in physical injury such as bruising, fractures, head, brain and spinal injuries. The nature of injury is in part dependent on the distance of a fall, and in part dependent on the nature of the surface collided with.

Causes of falls on level surfaces

The ease of opening windows; the distance they can be opened; the height of the sill and the design of the opening window, all contribute to the risk of a fall. The maintenance; stability and design of balconies; guard rails and balustrades may also all be contributory factors.

What preventative measures can landlords and home owners take?

Ensure that windows are fitted with safety catches to prevent them opening more than 100mm. Most modern friction hinges are fitted with restraining catches which can be by-passed in the event of an emergency allowing the window to be opened fully.

Ensure that windows are maintained and operate correctly and easily. Avoid having to use undue pressure or strain on an opening window which may result in sudden movement.

Where there is a low sill (less than 1100mm above the finished floor level) it may be necessary to fit safety catches, safety glass, guard rails, or a combination of these measures.

Ensure that guard rails on roof areas or around balconies are not less than 1100mm above floor level and that rails are not easily climbed by young children. Openings in guard rails should not be greater than 100mm. Ensure that balconies and guard rails are well maintained and securely fixed and doors leading to roofed areas that are not supposed to be accessed by occupants, are secure and well maintained.



Undertake a risk assessment of the dwelling for matters that may be relevant to the outcome of a fall. In particular, note the distance of a fall to the next level; the nature of the ground or surface features a person may collide with (concrete, shrubs, garden furniture, railings etc)

What preventative measures can tenants and owner occupiers take?

Avoid positioning household items below windows sills that may be easily climbed upon by children to reach opening lights of windows.

Use opening limiters, locks and safety features when ventilation is required to the dwelling and to prevent children opening windows.

Useful contacts and sources:

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

Colchester Borough Council's Building Control Section at building.control@colchester.gov.uk or by telephoning 01206 282436

Building Regulations *Approved Document K: protection from falling, collision and impact*, *Approved Document N: Glazing – safety in relation to impact, opening and cleaning*, *Approved Document B: fire safety*, and British Standards *BS 8213: Part 1*, and *BS6262*. On balconies etc, see – Building Regulations *Approved Document K: protection from falling, collision and impact*, and British Standards *BS6180*, and *BS6399 Part 1*.

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