

Appendix 3 - Concerns raised by residents

What impact will sprinklers have on the wider block?

By introducing the sprinkler systems into the residential blocks it is also necessary for the Council to be satisfied that no new hazards will be introduced into the building without suitable mitigation. It is likely that the tower blocks contain asbestos or asbestos containing materials which are a potential high risk to operatives (and residents) if disturbed during work without the right protections in place. To mitigate this risk a programme of asbestos surveys to common areas and a representative sample of flats is currently in progress. Asbestos reports are then produced for the proposed contractor prior to works commencing and method statements will be prepared by them and assessed by the Northwards Housing capital programme team as part of the contract process before work is allowed to start.

Potential risk of Legionnaire's disease

There has been some concern expressed by a small number of residents during consultation that introducing a wet sprinkler system into properties could create a risk of Legionnaire's disease. However, extensive international research shows that there is no realistic chance of a member of the public contracting Legionella from a sprinkler system when it operates. Current thinking is that the water droplet sizes generated by sprinkler head deflectors are too large to pass through the membranes of the lung and this, together with the fact that the oxygenation, pH and temperature of the water in sprinkler pipes does not provide a suitable environment for the Legionella bacteria to flourish. There is not therefore considered to be a risk to residents. There may be a statistical possibility of a sprinkler maintenance operative contracting the disease if the operative is standing below a sprinkler head that they are removing. However, there are no recorded cases of anyone contracting Legionella from a sprinkler system anywhere in the world. Such risk as might exist for maintenance personnel can be eliminated by adherence to proper working practices.

Water quality testing is carried out on a 6-monthly cycle to our tower blocks at present to identify any issues and this will be extended to include the sprinkler system.

Risk of leakages / water damage

One of the issues raised by residents during the consultation exercise, and in subsequent correspondence, has been the risk of leakages and water damage once sprinkler systems have been installed. Residents are concerned about the risk of damage to personal possessions, furniture etc.

Information obtained from a variety of sources shows that the likelihood of sprinkler systems leaking or setting off unnecessarily is extremely low. Data obtained by Building Control suggests that the likelihood of a system failure is 1 in 16,000,000. In comparison the likelihood of winning the lottery is 1 in 14,000,000.