

# Housing Health and Safety Rating System

This guide published by Rent Smart Wales, provides information for landlords on the 29 hazards used to assess the suitability of the dwelling under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

The HHSRS was introduced with the Housing Act 2004, and replaces the previous housing fitness standard. The government introduced the system as the way of deciding whether the housing conditions of residential premises are satisfactory. It looks at whether premises have any defects that may give rise to hazard, which in turn could cause harm to the occupiers, or any visitors.

A residential property should be capable of satisfying the basic fundamental needs for the everyday life of a household, such as providing shelter, space and facilities for the occupants.

The HHSRS assesses 29 housing hazards and the effects that each may have on the health and safety of the current or future occupant or any visitor to the property. It applies to all residential properties irrespective of whether they are occupied by a homeowner or a tenant. It is not possible to completely remove all risk of harm from within a property, but the system provides a way that hazards can be assessed and to decide on what is the best way of dealing with them.



# Physiological Requirements

## 1. Damp Mould Growth



Health threats due to dust mites, mould or fungal growths, including mental and social well-being health threats associated with damp, humid, mouldy conditions.

**Health effects:** allergies, asthma, effects of toxins from moulds, fungal infections

## 2. Excess cold



Threats to health from sub-optimal indoor temperatures. Healthy indoor temperature is approximately 21°C.

**Health effects:** respiratory (flu, pneumonia and bronchitis), cardiovascular conditions (heart attacks and strokes), thermoregulatory system impairment (body's temperature control) etc.

## 3. Excess Heat



Threats due to excessively high indoor air temperatures

**Health effects:** dehydration, trauma, stroke, cardiovascular, respiratory and genitourinary disorders.

## 4. Asbestos (and MMF)



Presence of, and exposure to, asbestos fibres and MMF within dwellings.

**Health effects:** Pleural disease, lung cancer, mesothelioma  
**NOTE:** Attempting to remove asbestos which is in good condition and not likely to be disturbed is significantly more hazardous than not removing it. Work on asbestos should be done by a contractor licensed by the Health and Safety Executive.

## 5. Biocides



Threats to health from chemicals used to treat timber and mould growth.

**Health effects:** risk from inhalation, skin contact, ingestion (eating or drinking the chemical)

## 6. Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products



Hazards due to the presence of excess levels in the atmosphere of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide or sulphur dioxide and smoke within the dwelling.

**Health effects:** Dizziness, nausea, headaches, disorientation, unconsciousness, respiratory disorders, bronchitis and breathlessness.

## 7. Lead



Health threat from lead ingestion. Lead sources: paint, water pipes, soil, fumes from leaded petrol.

**Health effects:** lead poisoning, nervous disorders, mental health, blood production issues, behavioural problems in children.

## 8. Radiation



Health threats from radon gas and its progeny's, primarily airborne, but also radon dissolved in water, concern expressed about possible health effects of electromagnetic fields (EMFs), Leakage from microwave ovens (rare).

**Health effects:** Lung cancer caused by exposure to radon gas. Risk increases with dose and duration of exposure.

## 9. Uncombusted fuel gas



Threat from fuel gas escaped into the atmosphere within the dwelling.

**Health effects:** suffocation

## 10. Volatile organic compounds



Diverse group of organic chemicals, including formaldehyde, that are gaseous at room temperature and found in a wide variety of materials in the home.

**Health effects:** allergies, irritation to eyes, nose, skin and respiratory tract, headaches, nausea, dizziness and drowsiness.

# Psychological Requirements

## 11. Crowding and space



Hazards associated with lack of space for living, sleeping and normal household/family life.

**Health effects:** psychological distress and mental disorders, increase hygiene risk and risk of accidents, personal space and privacy needs compromised.

## 12. Entry by intruders



Difficulties in keeping a dwelling secure against unauthorised entry and the maintenance of defensible space.

**Health effects:** Fear of burglary occurring, stress and anguish caused by burglary, injuries caused by intruder.

## 13. Lighting



Threats to physical and mental health associated with inadequate natural/artificial light, including psychological effects associated with the view from the dwelling through glazing.

**Health effects:** depression and psychological effects due to lack of natural light, eyestrain from glare and inadequate light.

## 14. Noise



Threats to physical and mental health due to exposure to noise inside the dwelling or within its curtilage.

**Health effects:** Psychological and physiological changes resulting from sleep disturbance, poor concentration, headaches and anxiety.

# Protection Against Infection

## 15. Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse



Poor design, layout and construction, such that the dwelling cannot be readily kept clean and hygienic, access into and harbourage within the dwelling for pests, inadequate and unhygienic provision for storing and disposal of household waste.

**Health effects:** Stomach and intestinal disease, infection, asthma, allergies, food spoilage, disease from rats and birds and physical hazards.

## 16. Food Safety



Threats of infection from poor provision and facilities for storage, preparation and cooking of food.

**Health effects:** Stomach and intestinal disease, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach upsets and dehydration.

## 17. Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage



Threats of infection and threats to mental health associated with personal hygiene, including personal and clothes washing facilities, sanitation and drainage.

**Health effects:** stomach and intestinal disease, including dysentery, skin infections and depression.

## 18. Water supply



The quality and adequacy of the water supply within the dwellings for drinking and domestic purposes, including threats to health from contamination by bacteria, protozoa, parasites, viruses and chemical pollutants.

**Health effects:** dehydration, fatigue, headaches, dry skin, bladder infections, stomach, intestinal and respiratory disorders, Legionnaires disease

# Protection against Accidents

## 19. Falls associated with baths etc.



Falls associated with a bath, shower or similar facility.

**Health effects:** Physical injuries, cuts, lacerations, swelling and bruising.

## 20. Falling on level surfaces etc.



Falls on any level surface such as floors, yards and paths, including falls associated with trip steps, thresholds or ramps where the change in level is less than 300mm.

**Health effects:** physical injury, bruising, fractures, head, brain and spinal injuries

## 21. Falling on stairs etc.



Falls associated with stairs, steps and ramps where the change in level is greater than 300mm. It includes falls associated with internal stairs or ramps within the dwelling, external steps or ramps within the curtilage of the dwelling; internal common stairs or ramps and external steps or ramps within the curtilage of the building containing the dwelling and giving access to the dwelling and those to shared facilities or means of escape in case of fire. It includes falls over balustrading associated with stairs, steps or ramps.

**Health effects:** physical injury, bruising, fractures, head brain and spinal injuries.

## 22. Falling between levels



Falls from one level to another, inside or outside a dwelling where the difference in levels is more than 300mm, e.g. falls from balconies, landings, out of windows, over garden retaining walls etc.

**Health effects:** physical injuries

## 23. Electrical Hazards



Hazards from shock and burns resulting from exposure to electricity, including from lightning strikes.

**Health effects:** shock

## 24. Fire



Threats from exposure to uncontrolled fire associated smoke at a dwelling. It includes injuries from clothing catching alight, which appears to be common when people attempt to extinguish such a fire.

**Health effects:** burns, being overcome by smoke or gas, death.

## 25. Flames, hot surfaces etc.



Threats of burns – injuries caused by contact with a hot flame or fire, with hot objects or hot non-water based liquids; scalds-injuries caused by contact with hot liquids and vapours. Includes burns caused by clothing catching alight.

**Health effects:** burns, scalds, permanent scarring, death.

## 26. Collision and entrapment



Risks of injury from trapping body parts in architectural features, e.g trapping fingers in doors, low ceilings, walls.

**Health effects:** injuries through collision or entrapment involving doors and windows, e.g cuts from glass, shutting door on part of body.

# Protection against Accidents

## 27. Explosions



Threat from the blast of the explosion, from debris generated from the blast and from the partial or total collapse of a building as the result of an explosion.

**Health effects:** while the likelihood of an explosion is small, injuries can include: physical injuries, crushing, bruising, puncture, fracture, head, brain and spinal injuries, scalding if involves hot water.

## 28. Position and operability of amenities etc.



Threats of physical strain associated with functional space and other features at dwellings.

**Health effects:** strain and sprain injuries.

## 29. Structural collapse and falling elements



Threat of dwelling collapse or of a part of the fabric being displaced or falling due to inadequate fixing, disrepair, or the result of adverse weather conditions.

**Health effects:** physical injuries

## Health Effects and Prevention

Some hazards are more likely to occur than others, for example injuries associated with falls are common, and some have a greater more serious or more immediate impact on health status. The immediate and long term health effects caused by these hazards; are varied and not necessarily limited to those listed in this guide. Additional details provided in the HHSRS can assist landlords in identifying hazards in their properties and provide them with information on preventing and minimising risks.

## Further Information

More detailed information about the HHSRS is available from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister website at [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk). The guidance provided

by the Government is the Housing Health and Safety Rating System – Operating Guidance ISBN 13: 978 1185112 846 4 is available to download from the Rent Smart Wales website, or to buy from Stationary Office Ltd, PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN.

## Rent Smart Wales

Rent Smart Wales was launched on November 23rd 2015. Rent Smart Wales process landlord registrations and grant licences to landlords and agents who need to comply with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. To learn more about the scheme and your rights and responsibilities as a landlord, information can be found on our website at: [www.rentsmart.gov.wales](http://www.rentsmart.gov.wales) or contact us on **03000133344**.