

# Making rented housing safer

The growing trend towards local authority accreditation, licensing or registration of rented properties will help improve safety with more smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms, says leading manufacturer Kidde.



: Rob Hunter with Boris Johnson

circulation areas. Grade D hard-wired, interconnected smoke and heat alarms with back-up power are also recommended, as this latest edition of the Code now excludes battery-only alarms from all rented homes.

### London Rental Standard

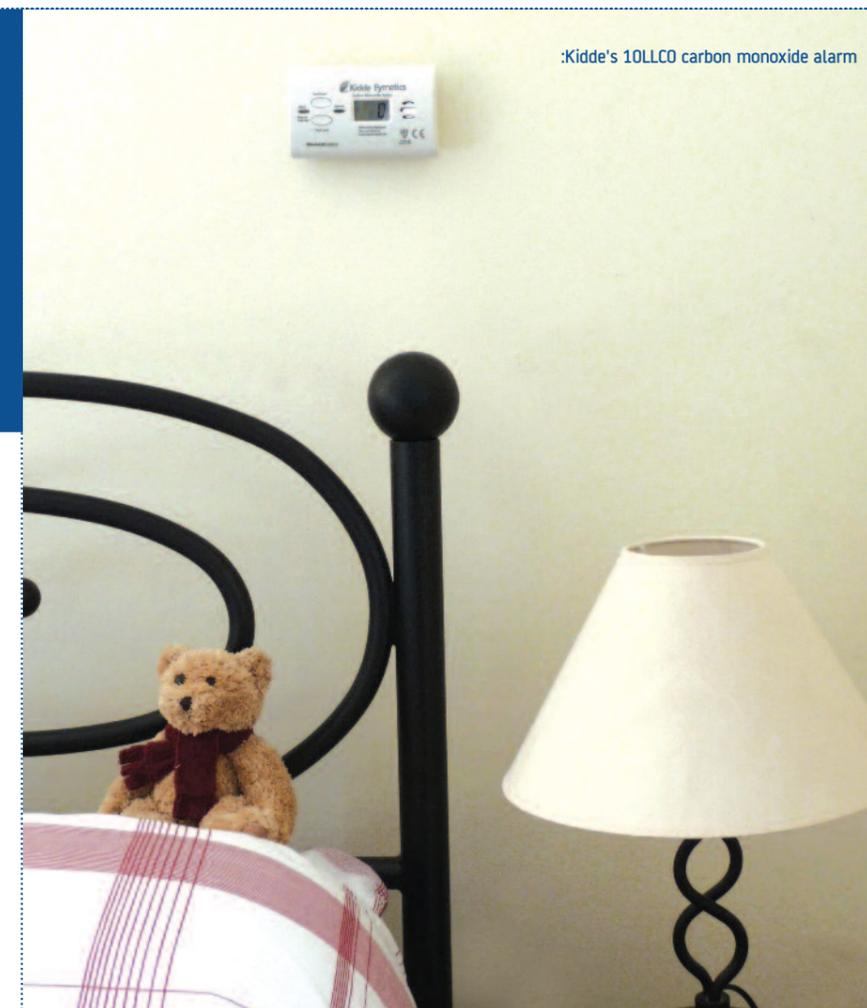
The move towards higher safety standards in rented housing was highlighted recently when Kidde customer and specialist student housing provider Rob Hunter, Managing Director of Place Group UK, became the first private landlord to be awarded Mayor Boris Johnson's 'London Rental Standard' badge of accreditation. This summer, the Mayor visited one of Rob's properties in Haringey to launch the new Standard. The London Rental Standard is a voluntary set of minimum standards that the Mayor expects from

landlords, managing agents and letting agents. Properties must have no HHSRS 'category 1' hazards or significant/multiple 'category 2' hazards and must also comply with licensing schemes where applicable.

Rob's company has been operating for 20 years in north London and fitting appropriate smoke/heat and CO alarms in line with BS Codes of Practice is now top of his list of priorities. In all his properties, original battery powered alarms have been replaced with Kidde's Slick® mains powered (with back-up) smoke and heat alarms featuring wireless interconnect. Every bedroom now has its own smoke alarm, as well as circulation areas, and there are interconnected heat alarms in communal living areas and kitchens.

### Eliminating Intrusive Wiring

In existing properties, wireless interlinking technology can save time and disruption to the building fabric – particularly important with historic, 'listed' properties – when interconnecting smoke and heat alarms. For example, by using accessories such as Kidde's Slick® Wireless Alarm Base, intrusive wiring between mains alarms, each powered from an adjacent lighting circuit, can be eliminated. This is also useful for extending an existing hard-wired interconnect installation of the company's products. And it enables a Remote



:Kidde's 10LLCO carbon monoxide alarm

The 2004 Housing Act introduced mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) with three or more storeys and occupied by five or more tenants in two or more households. But local authorities are increasingly looking to regulate other types of rented properties in their areas as well. Obviously, an important part of this process is to ensure that rented properties are safe and meet reasonable standards. Local authorities achieve this using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) risk assessment procedure. They may also carry out HHSRS inspections because tenants have requested it or properties are considered hazardous.

### Definitive Guidance

Fire and carbon monoxide poisoning are identified as two of the 29 HHSRS hazards. Properly sited and maintained smoke and CO alarms are HHSRS 'ideals' and a lack of them is cited as one of the 'relevant matters' affecting the likelihood and harm outcome. Generally, 'ideals' are considered as meeting current British Standards or Building Regulations – although the latter are inappropriate for both fire and CO risks. Here, BS Codes of Practice provide the definitive guidance for existing (rather than new-build) properties. For example, the Building Regulations Part J Approved Document only requires a CO alarm with installation of certain, solid fuel heating appliances. The continuing toll

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: Rob Hunter, Managing Director of Place Group UK

of deaths and illness resulting from carbon monoxide incidents associated with other fuels and types of combustion appliances highlights the urgent need for a better approach than this.

For smoke and heat alarms, the BS 5839-6:2013, Part 6: Code of practice applies. It tabulates the minimum Categories (in which areas smoke/heat alarms are required) and Grades (reliability of a system in terms of its power sources) recommended for different types of housing, including existing rented properties. For most homes up to three storeys the Code recommends a minimum of Category LD2, although a dedicated risk assessment may be required in some situations. LD2 means at least one smoke alarm in every principal habitable room and at least one heat alarm in every kitchen, in addition to smoke alarms in



:Wireless interconnect smoke alarms in student bedrooms

Test & Hush switch accessory to be used, which is helpful for elderly or disabled people, or where alarms are fitted on high ceilings.

Rob Hunter commented: 'We needed a fast-fit system of smoke and heat alarms using wireless interconnect to minimise disruption to the building fabric with wiring, that also allows us flexibility to deal with any future changes. The alarms also had to fit our ethos of providing robust, quality housing and anticipating higher standards to come. Kidde has given us

tremendous support and back-up. They are quick to reply and offer a no quibble satisfaction policy that is wholly supported and managed by very experienced staff. As we expand out of London to Lincoln, we make sure that Kidde is specified by each and every contractor we use to ensure that we future-proof our work there".

In addition, Kidde's hard-wired CO alarms with digital displays are installed on each floor of all Rob's properties. But current Regulations and the Code of Practice also allow use of battery-only CO alarms, where the battery is designed to operate for the whole working life of the alarm. Here, Kidde lead the way with 10LLCO, the only range of 10-year guaranteed alarms with CO sensors – the key component – actually tested throughout a 10-year period or longer. Kidde also manufactures its own sensors, allowing tighter quality controls to be applied. The alarms also have an extra End-of-Life/Fault LED and an alarm sander designed to protect occupants and installers' hearing when testing, with an initial lower level of sound being generated.



: Kidde's Slick range

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