

GAS IN MULTI-OCCUPANCY BUILDINGS INSPECTION – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1 – Who are GTC?

GTC is a statutory Gas Transporter. GTC own and operate the gas infrastructure supplying your property, terminating at the Emergency Control Valve immediately upstream of the meter.

2 – Why have GTC carried out an inspection on the block of flats?

GTC carry out inspections of internal gas pipework which it owns up to the gas meter within multi occupancy premises on its network, to confirm it is in an efficient state of repair and that the fabric of the building does not compromise the safe operation of that pipework and equipment. This is usually completed between 2 and 10 years from the date gas was introduced into the infrastructure, depending on the type of building and degree of risk.

3 – What is meant by the term “infrastructure” in the letter, and how is this distinct from the “Building Fabric”?

The term “infrastructure” is used to describe the gas pipework and valves (up to and including the Emergency Control Valve immediately upstream of the meter) that are contained on a gas network owned and operated by GTC. Please note the distinction between GTC’s infrastructure and the building fabric which includes the ducts, ventilation, riser shaft, wall piercings and other parts of the building within which GTC’s infrastructure is sited but not owned or the responsibility of GTC.

4 – What legal rights do GTC have to access the gas pipes inside the building?

The Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996 requires all Gas Transporters to ensure no gas is conveyed in a pipeline unless the pipeline has been designed that, as far as reasonably practicable, it may be examined, and work of maintenance may be carried out safely.

The Regulations also require that the Gas Transporter ensures its pipeline is maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair.

The Gas Safety (Rights of Entry) Regulations 1996 provide the Gas Transporter broad access rights to premises where required to ensure the safety of its gas infrastructure

5 – Who is responsible for ensuring the building fabric complies with relevant gas and building standards?

This will depend on the precise circumstances of the building’s ownership and operation. Property Managing Agents, Factors, Owners, and Landlords should take their own legal advice. The responsible person for the building should ensure the building fabric complies with relevant gas and building standards. In the first instance, GTC sends all written communications to the Agent identified as acting on behalf of the building owners unless agreed otherwise. In Scotland, the principal duty holder of a multi-occupancy building are the co-owners, who have responsibility for the safety and maintenance of their building. The co-owners may appoint a Factor/Property Manager to undertake the duties on behalf of the responsible person and ensure the building fabric complies with relevant gas and building standards.

6 - Who is responsible for ensuring the gas pipes are in good working condition?

Regulation 13 of the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996 requires GTC as a Gas Transporter, to provide appropriate arrangements for on-going maintenance to ensure the pipeline remains in an efficient working order and in good repair.

7 - If GTC needs to carry out works on its gas infrastructure who pays for this?

GTC is responsible for costs for work on its gas infrastructure unless it is caused by third party damage. GTC is not responsible for the costs for works to the building fabric.

8 - Do GTC need to have access to the pipes and valves etc?

In order to properly maintain GTC gas infrastructure, GTC require ready access to its gas pipes within the building for examination and monitoring,

Pipework & valves must be accessible at all times in case of an emergency situation. Where it is not deemed accessible, if an emergency situation should occur, GTC's emergency service provider may be required to isolate the gas supply remote from the building. The pipes are located within the common areas of the building and/or within individual flats depending on the configuration of the gas network pipeline and location of the emergency control valve at the gas meter.

9 - When the multi storey building was constructed who was responsible for ensuring the building fabric complied with relevant legislation?

The Developer was responsible for ensuring the building was constructed to the relevant building standards and relevant legislation.

10 - If GTC identifies during its inspections that the fabric of the building may not comply with relevant gas regulations and standards e.g., inadequate ventilation, how is this addressed?

GTC provide an inspection report to the Principal duty holder via Agent or Factor identified as dealing with the management of the building, requesting further communication in order to resolve any potential safety issues.

If GTC does not receive any appropriate response an escalation process is followed which may ultimately result in GTC undertaking a site-specific risk assessment to determine whether it can continue to safely convey gas to the building, in which event residents will be given advance notice of GTC's concern for safety and when the gas supply will be disconnected.

11 - Does GTC have a legal right to disconnect the gas supply to the block of flats?

Yes, where GTC identifies a safety issue which may compromise the safe conveyance of gas and such details have been communicated to the relevant interested parties and not resolved, GTC may make arrangements to disconnect the supply of gas to the building.

12 - Why is GTC sending more letters when work to resolve identified safety concerns will be undertaken?

GTC is required to escalate its process to the next stage in accordance with its gas safety obligations to ensure the continued safe conveyance of gas if no formal response and proposed timelines for safety issues to be appropriately resolved have been received from the Managing Agent or Factor.

13 – Why have I received a letter from a company called Forward Validation Services?

Forward Validation Services (FVS) are building safety compliance managers acting on behalf of GTC. They will liaise with the Principal Accountable Person in providing information in support of GTC's gas infrastructure inspections within higher risk buildings in England/Wales. They will also advise on building fabric issues with compromises the safe conveyance of gas to the building.

14 - What legislation covers ventilation of pipe ducts and sealing/firestopping of pipe penetrations through fire compartment walls/floors?

The building regulations provide detail of ventilation requirements for gas pipes within ducts and the fire stopping arrangements required for pipe penetrations through fire compartment walls/floors.

British standard code of practice BS8313 – 'Accommodation of building services in ducts' also provides more detailed guidance on ventilation requirements.

15 - Can you be more specific on the location of the building fabric works required?

Our inspection report only details the relevant building fabric defects which were identified during the limited inspection. It is the responsibility of the principal duty holder to undertake their own thorough checks and remedial actions throughout the building.

16 - Who can do the works relating to the building fabric remedials?

GTC cannot comment on who can undertake this work. The building owner should seek advice from their managing agent or factor.

17 - What evidence is required to confirm close out of the building fabric defects identified in the GTC inspection report?

GTC require photographic evidence to verify the defects raised in our inspection report have been satisfactorily remediated together with the return of the declaration (attached to our inspection report) duly signed by the nominated responsible person for the building.

18 - Once we are ready to carry out the building fabric remedial works, who can we contact for further advice?

Please note GTC is unable to provide advice in respect of any design or material specification/installation requirements.

In the first instance, if you have any other queries, please contact the GTC administration team on 01359 308103.