

External Guide

Concealed Gas Flues

Flue Systems Concealed Within Voids in Apartment Blocks

In 2008 the Health and Safety Executive issued a safety alert concerned with gas central heating boilers sited on internal walls. Such flue systems were designed, sometimes up to as much as 30 metres in length, to enable greater flexibility in the building design. This type of installation is most common in multi-storey flats and apartments built since 2000; some modern terraced homes could also be affected.

To comply with The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations (GSUR), a flue must be visibly inspected throughout its route, but if built into a ceiling void, the ability to do so is impaired unless inspection panels are part of the construction. In November 2010 the Health and Safety Executive issued new guidelines and a Landlord has until 31st December 2012 to arrange for inspection hatches for such flues. After 1st January 2013 any gas engineer working on a system where the complete flue is not visible will advise the Landlord that the system is 'at risk' in accordance with the Gas Industry Unsafe Situations Procedure (GIUSP) and turn off the gas supply to the boiler so it cannot be used.

I Have a Concealed Flue – What Are My Options?

By the 1 January 2013 you will have to either:

- 1) Arrange for the installation of inspection hatches, by a Gas Safe engineer, throughout the length of the concealed flue
- 2) Relocate/Replace the current boiler and flue to an outside wall
- 3) Replace the boiler with an alternative form of heating

If your property is under two years old, then the builder is responsible to put right any defects or damage caused by non-compliance with NHBC technical standards. If between three to ten years old, the NHBC provides insurance cover for any defect in a flue or chimney resulting from non-compliance with NHBC standards that cause a danger to health and safety. Contact details for NHBC Claims is 0844 633 1000.

If you would like Leaders to arrange a quote from a Gas Safe contractor please contact your local Property Management Department who will be pleased to help.

What Action Should I Take Now?

In the interim period, where no inspection hatches are fitted, the registered gas engineer will carry out a simple risk assessment as detailed below, which should ensure that the risk from exposure to CO is managed in the short-term. The risk assessment includes:

- Looking for signs of leakage along the flue route; and
- Carrying out a flue combustion analysis check (and obtaining a satisfactory result) and;
- Checking for the presence of suitable audible carbon monoxide (CO) alarms (and installing such alarms where they are not already fitted)

When carrying out a risk assessment the gas installer may need to consider other buildings in the development. If one flue is found to be faulty, then it could be that all the gas installations in that development were installed in the same manner and therefore need to be checked.

Until the 31st December 2012 as long as the boiler passes the series of safety checks and the risk assessment does not identify any concerns about its safety the boiler can be continued to be used. Suitable inspection hatches will need to be fitted the length of the flue by 31st December 2012. The Health and Safety Executive has advised that wherever possible it is recommended by that inspection hatches are fitted before this date.

Urgent action needs to be taken - after the 31st December 2012, any appliance where the complete flue is not visible will be condemned and disconnected.