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Roscommon County Council

Tenant's Handbook



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Note:

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Introduction

Roscommon County Council welcomes you as a tenant and wishes you and your family well in your home.

Roscommon County Council is pleased to provide you with a copy of the tenant's handbook. As your landlord we are taking this opportunity to introduce you to, or remind you of, the wide range of services available to our tenants. This handbook is also intended to clarify the responsibilities both of Roscommon County Council as the landlord and you as the tenant.

The tenant handbook is intended as a guide and does not go into detail about every aspect of the services available. Please keep this copy in a safe place, as you may need to refer to it from time to time. You may also be asked to refer to it when making enquiries with the Housing Department or your local Area Office. See contact details below.

For your convenience, a list of contact telephone numbers, including emergency numbers is provided at the back of this handbook. This information will facilitate easy, speedy and direct access to those who provide services.

WE WANT YOU TO HAVE MORE CONTROL OVER YOUR COMMUNITY AND THE ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOU

Roscommon County Council Housing Department is keen to encourage a partnership approach to housing management; this will include working with local residents associations and estate management groups to share responsibility for building better and more sustainable communities. We want to share decision making with you so that you have more control over your own area and the community in which you live.

It is our function to provide you with the best possible housing service in an efficient and effective manner. If we are to deliver a quality service we need to know what you think about the services provided, so do not hesitate to contact us and let us have your views. We may not always be in a position to meet all of our tenants' requests, but we make every effort to provide a quality housing service.

YOU MAY CONTACT THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL AS FOLLOWS:

In writing to:	Call in Person to:
Housing Department, Roscommon County Council, The Courthouse, Roscommon.	The Housing Department is currently based upstairs at the West Business Park, Circular Road, Roscommon.

We can also be contacted by phone, email or through our website as follows:

- Housing Department contact number: **090 6637238**
- Housing Liaison Officer contact number: **090 6637387**
- Email us at **housing@roscommoncoco.ie**
- By Web at **www.roscommoncoco.ie**

Housing matters of a confidential nature can be discussed in private with experienced housing staff.



Tenancy Conditions

The Tenancy Agreement you sign when you are allocated a house contains the conditions of your tenancy. When you sign this agreement you are agreeing to all the conditions set out in the agreement. If you breach any of these conditions you are breaching your tenancy agreement.

1. HOW DO TENANCIES OPERATE?

- Tenants must live in the house as their main home and nowhere else.
- Tenants must not use the house, garden or shed as a shop, workshop, factory or business premises.
- Trading signs of any description shall not be erected or displayed on or about the premises.
- Tenants must not cause any damage to the house and must keep the premises and every part thereof in a clean and proper state.
- Tenants must not cause any nuisance or allow any refuse or offensive matter to accumulate within a dwelling or garden attached to the dwelling.
- The Council may agree to a change in tenancy in certain circumstances, for example, in the case of a death, legal separation etc. If you require further information in relation to this matter you should contact The Housing Department.
- Tenants must give the Council four weeks notice in writing if they wish to surrender their house.
- Tenants must not cease to reside in the house for more than 6 weeks in any one year, without prior approval in writing from Roscommon County Council.

2. CAN A TENANT TAKE IN LODGERS AND SUB-TENANTS?

It is not permitted for any person to reside in a Council house without the prior consent of the Council. A Tenant cannot assign, sub-let, sub-divide or let the premises to another person.

3. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GARDEN AND GENERAL HOUSE MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP?

- The Tenant is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the garden. Housing Maintenance is shared between the tenant and the Council, see Housing Maintenance Section of this Handbook. The Tenant must make sure that they, other people living with them including children and any visitors to their home, look after the house and garden in a reasonable manner.
- Each householder is obliged to keep free of litter the footpath or pavement adjoining their property and also any road gutter on or at the side of such pavement. Refuse should be left for collection in a manner which ensures that it does not become litter.
- Any laneway/walkway adjoining your house should be kept in a clean condition and should not be used for dumping.
- Tenants can reduce refuse by recycling glass, drink cans etc. at their local recycling centre free of charge. For more information on Environmental issues see relevant section of this handbook.



4. CAN A TENANT MAKE ALTERATIONS TO THEIR HOUSE?

- Tenants must seek permission in writing from the Council's Housing Department, prior to carrying out any improvements, alterations or additions to their house.
- Tenants must also seek permission in writing prior to erecting any shed, outhouse etc., in the garden.
- Before agreeing to any such request, the Council will check the safety and suitability of the proposal. In some instances it will be necessary for an approved contractor to carry out the works.
- Following consideration of your proposal, the Council will notify you of its decision in writing. Works shall not commence without prior approval from the Council.
- Planning permission may be required for certain works.

5. WHAT HAPPENS IF A TENANT DISTURBS THEIR NEIGHBOURS?

- Tenants must make sure that they, other people living with them including children and any visitors to their home do not damage or become a nuisance to neighbours, this means:
 - No drugs
 - No criminal activity
 - No violence or threats of violence
 - No loud music etc.

Any of the above on investigation may lead to legal proceedings resulting in a Tenant and their family being evicted with no chance of being rehoused. Roscommon County Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy clearly outlines the Council's policy on dealing with anti-social behaviour.

6. CAN A TENANT KEEP PETS IN THE HOUSE?

- Tenants may keep a domestic pet, such as a cat or a dog, (exemptions apply) with the prior approval of the Council, as long as they do not become a nuisance to their neighbours. Horses, poultry, pigs and birds are not domestic animals. Keeping any of these is a serious breach of a tenancy agreement. Under the Control of Dogs Act, 1986, every dog should be licensed. A licence may be purchased from any Post Office.
- Dogs that are considered dangerous e.g., german sheppard (alsatian), pit bull terrier, rottweiler, doberman pinscher, english bull terriers etc., cannot be kept on the premises or in the vicinity of the premises under any circumstances.
- Failure to have a dog licensed or to keep it under proper control may result in on-the-spot fines. Particular care should be taken to keep your dog under control on bin day.



Rent

The Housing Department will assess your rent and deal with any queries, which you may have about your account i.e. methods of payment, arrears of rent. Some general questions are answered below but you can contact the Housing Department at any time to make more specific queries in relation to your account. It is important that you know your account number before calling us.

HOW CAN TENANTS PAY THEIR RENT?

It is the Council's policy to provide its tenants with as broad a range of payment methods as possible. Payments can currently be made by the following methods: -

- **Household Budget Scheme:** You sign a form, which allows Social Welfare to deduct your rent from your weekly Social Welfare payment. This sum is paid directly to the Council in respect of your rent.
- **Bankers Standing Order:** You can complete a Bankers Standing Order Mandate in your Bank, or you can complete the form and the Council will forward it to your Bank on your behalf.
- **Billpay:** You can pay your rent at any Post Office by using your Billpay Payments Card. You can order a Billpay Payments Card from the Rents Section. There are 3 methods of payment available to customers using Billpay:
 - Post Office – call into your local post office with your card and pay over the counter.
 - Post Points – These are available at some retail shops – contact your local post office or the Housing Department for further details.
 - Online payment using Credit Card, Debit Card or Laser Card by logging onto www.billpay.ie
- **Credit Transfer Wages Deduction:** Check with your employer
- **In person at the Council's payments office:** Payment can be made at the Cash Desk, Motor Taxation Office, Abbey Street, Roscommon.
- **By Cheque/Postal Order/Money Order:** Post to Finance Section, Roscommon County Council, The Courthouse, Roscommon. Please put your name and account number on the back of the cheque.
- **Bank Giro Book:** This is a lodgement book issued to tenants by the finance office of the Council. Call into the Bank and pay rent by filling out a lodgement slip in book.

The Rents Department will issue you with a statement of your account upon request.

HOW ARE RENTS CALCULATED?

The rent payable in respect of a Local Authority house is not related to rent payable in the private sector but is based on the ability of the tenant to pay. Rents are based on household income, in a manner which ensures that the amount of your income charged as rent is reasonable and does not lead to undue financial difficulties.

Your rent is calculated based on the Council's Differential Rent Scheme. The Council reviews its scheme every year. It is very important that you return your completed rent form each year by the date specified by the Council. The income of all members of your house is taken into account when your rent is calculated.



WHAT HAPPENS IF CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE?

You should keep the Council informed of any change in household circumstances. For example, Tenants should let us know when:

- A person in the household gets a job.
- A person with an income joins the household.
- A person in the household starts claiming Social Welfare.
- There is a death in the household.
- There is a birth in the household.
- A person leaves the household.

Tenants can notify us of these changes by contacting the Rent Section. Your new rent will be assessed from the date the changes occur.

WHAT IF A TENANT DOES NOT NOTIFY THE COUNCIL OF A CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCES?

When changes in a Tenants circumstances come to light, their rent will be re-assessed and their account backdated. This can result in serious arrears on a tenants rent account.

WHAT IF A TENANT FAILS TO RETURN THEIR RENT ASSESSMENT FORM?

If a Tenant fails to return the form, rent will be assessed on the best information available to the Council. It is important to note that maximum rent may be applied.

WHAT IF A TENANT RENT FALLS INTO ARREARS?

If you are experiencing difficulties paying your rent, you should contact the Council immediately. The sooner you tackle the problem the less likely it is to get out of hand. You can clear your arrears on a phased basis, provided you make an arrangement and adhere to it. In the majority of cases such arrangements take the form of ensuring that your weekly or monthly rent is paid and in addition a contribution is made towards the arrears on your account. You will be required to commit yourself to such agreements by signing a formal undertaking to meet the agreed payments plan. Please note that the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is also there to provide you with the help you need to get out of debt. (See contact details at the back of this book.)

DO THE COUNCIL TAKE TENANTS TO COURT?

Yes. The Council will make every effort to facilitate you in paying your rent. However, if you fail to pay your rent and if you allow arrears to accumulate on your rent account without making a serious effort to address them, legal proceedings may be taken against you.



IS THE COUNCIL LIKELY TO TAKE MY HOUSE FROM ME?

Should the Council decide to take Court action an eviction/repossession order will be sought. Evictions are traumatic for any family and can be avoided by keeping a clear rent account or by contacting us and making an arrangement to clear your arrears. Any Tenant evicted for rent arrears is still responsible for the arrears and the legal costs.

VACANT HOUSES

Vacant houses in an estate can become a target for anti-social behaviour. If you intend surrendering your house, you must give four weeks notice, in writing to the Council.

If there is a vacant house in your estate, do not assume that we know about it! Tell us! You can contact the Housing Department with the details.

HOW CAN TENANTS BECOME INVOLVED IN THE RUNNING OF THEIR ESTATE?

Estate Management is all about creating vibrant communities, sustainable neighbourhoods and the encouragement of pride of place for all living there. It is your estate and it is hoped that through your involvement both the Council and the residents can benefit by making it a better place in which to live.

Roscommon County Council recognises that tenants know best, the strengths, weaknesses and problems associated with their estates and also acknowledge that the involvement of tenants in the running of their estate is essential to ensure good quality housing services.

Tenant involvement is vital for the development of a good community spirit as well as enhancing the physical, social and recreational development of the estate.

We want you as a tenant to participate and have a say in the day to day running of your estate. Do not leave it to the Council, join in by working through your tenants association, and help make your estate a better place to live.

If there is no tenant/residents association operating in your area and you and your neighbours are interested in establishing one we will assist you. For more information contact your Housing Liaison Officer at 090 6637387.

DO WHAT YOU CAN TO MAKE YOUR HOME AND COMMUNITY A PLACE THAT YOU CAN BE PROUD OF. ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL WILL SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR EFFORTS.



Neighbourhood Nuisance

A range of issues can cause neighbourhood problems, which in turn may result in minor disputes. Neighbourhood nuisance problems are common. However, most can be resolved quickly and easily without causing undue distress or upset. Roscommon County Council will not generally become involved in neighbourhood nuisance problems. If the first your neighbour hears of your problem is from us, it can make matters worse.

WHAT IS NUISANCE?

It is behaviour causing others to suffer through lack of consideration, not usually aimed at one person. The term "Nuisance" is applied to various types of conduct which are less serious than anti-social behaviour e.g. lack of control over pets, untidy gardens, litter, minor noise pollution, family arguments affecting neighbours, minor verbal harassment etc.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM HAVING PROBLEMS WITH MY NEIGHBOURS?

The first thing to consider is that your neighbour may not be aware that their actions are causing a nuisance. If this is the case, you may be able to resolve the problem by simply speaking to your neighbour and drawing their attention to the matter in a tactful manner. Generally this is the best approach to neighbour nuisance as the problem can be quickly resolved and you still maintain a good relationship with your neighbour.



Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is a term used to describe any behaviour which is harmful to residents, residential amenities, play areas etc. Such behaviour includes:

- The manufacture, production, preparation, importation, exportation, sale, supply, possession for the purposes of sale or supply, or distribution of a controlled drug.
- Any behaviour which causes or is likely to cause any significant or persistent danger, injury, damage, alarm, loss or fear to any person living, working or otherwise lawfully in or in the vicinity of a house provided by a housing authority.
- Violence, threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment or serious obstruction of any person.
- Behaviour which causes any significant or persistent impairment of a person's use or enjoyment of his or her home.
- Damage to or defacement by writing or other marks of any property, including a person's home.

There is an obligation on you, the tenant, to ensure that neither you, nor any member of your household or anyone who visits your house engages in anti-social behaviour of any kind.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CAN SERIOUSLY AFFECT YOU AND YOUR TENANCY

Any tenant who engages in anti-social behaviour may face eviction or any member of the tenants' household engaging in such behaviour may be excluded from both the dwelling and the surrounding area of the dwelling.

Roscommon County Council may refuse to sell a dwelling to a tenant where it considers that the tenant is or has been engaged in anti-social behaviour, or that a sale to the tenant would not be in the interest of existing tenants/residents in that area. (i.e. on estate management grounds).

A copy of Roscommon County Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy is available from the Housing Department on request and on the Council's website www.roscommoncoco.ie

**We need your help in order to succeed in tackling anti-social behaviour in our area.
REMEMBER all information is kept in the strictest confidence.**



Housing Maintenance

The Housing Department in conjunction with your local Area Office are responsible for the management and control of the Council's housing stock. If you have any queries about maintenance, you should contact either the Housing Department or your local Area Office. The telephone numbers are listed at the back of the handbook.

THE HOUSING MAINTENANCE SECTION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF REPAIRS TO RENTED DWELLINGS:

1. Roofs (including tiles/slates, ridge cappings and barges).
2. External portion of chimneys and cappings.
3. Fascias, soffits, gutters and down pipes.
4. External walls of dwelling house including plastering, brickwork/blockwork but excluding external painting.
5. Windows and sashes.
6. External doors and frames omit to house.
7. Repairs to burst pipes in the dwelling caused by frost or freezing temperatures.
8. General repairs to electrical wiring including damage caused by fire or storm damage.

The Council will examine the position of your rent on the receipt of a maintenance request and the Council will undertake to carry out those repairs, for which it has responsibility, only when you have a clear rent account subject to the availability of adequate resources.

WHAT TYPE OF REPAIRS IS THE TENANT RESPONSIBLE FOR?

Each tenant, on the signing of his/her tenancy agreement, assumes responsibility for repairs of a non-structural nature as follows:

Plumbing Repairs:

1. Cleaning of gully traps.
2. Maintenance of septic tank private sewerage system.
3. Replacement or repair of waste pipes inside the dwelling.
4. Clearing air locks in pipes or radiators.
5. Replacement or repair of taps on sink unit and wash-hand basins including leaking or dripping taps.
6. Replacement or repair of toilet bowl, cistern and cover, wash hand basin, bath, except if these are cracked and leaking through fair wear and tear.
7. Replacement or repair of ball cock or other water flotation control system within the cistern unit.
8. Replacement or repair of ball cock in header storage tank.
9. Replacement or repair of toilet seats and handles.
10. Maintenance of an adequate supply of water in the storage tank for the safety of boiler.



Cooking and Heating Appliances

1. Replacement of fire bricks in the range.
2. Maintenance and repair of solid fuel, gas or other heating or cooking appliances installed by the tenant(s).
3. Maintenance and cleaning of central heating boiler/system and annual servicing by a competent, experienced operator, with completed certificate submitted to Roscommon County Council.
4. The basket/grate in all fireplaces and the replacement of glass panels in doors of room heaters.
5. Repair of room heater where damage is caused by improper use.
6. Repair and replacement of tiles on fireplace/hearth.

Internal Repairs

1. Repair/replace damage to external doors and windows, which includes glass and locks.
2. Curtain rails and window boards.
3. Repairs arising from condensation damage.
4. Wall, floor and fireplace tiles.
5. Floor finishes.
6. Ventilation extract from covers.
7. Internal "normal shrinkage" plaster cracks.
8. Internal decoration.
9. Cleaning of chimneys at least twice annually.
10. Internal joinery e.g. skirting boards, internal doors, door handles, locks and kitchen units.
11. Draught proofing doors and windows.
12. Regular testing of smoke alarms.

Electrical Repairs

1. Repairs of electrical appliances and sockets not provided by the Council.
2. Replacement of fuses and light bulbs.
3. All repairs not damaged through fair wear and tear, storm or fire damage.

N.B. Where it is the tenant's responsibility to repair an electrical fitting or installation, the work should be carried out by a qualified and competent Electrical Contractor. Where such a Contractor carries out electrical work in a Council dwelling, the name and the business address of the contractor must be sent to the Housing Department together with a brief description of the work carried out.

External Repairs

1. Maintenance and repair of gardens, hedges, fences, boundary walls and gates.
2. Maintenance and repair of storage sheds where provided.
3. Cleaning of silt, leaves or other deposits from gutters and downpipes.



4. All damage to external door finishes.
5. Maintenance and repair of sewers between the dwelling and the main sewer line.
6. Maintenance and repair of footpaths, drive ways and entrances.
7. Clean and keep free of litter footpaths etc. adjoining the property.
8. Keep water meter/stopcock chambers uncovered and accessible at all times with a suitable valve/stopcock key kept available at all times.
9. Notify your local Area Office of missing or damaged valve covers.

Additional requirements for tenants of Apartments

1. The Tenant shall not permit anything to be brought onto the premises which may expose the premises or any other unit in the apartment block to any weight or strain to excess of that which the premises is calculated to bear with due margin for safety.
2. The Tenant shall not shake or permit to be shaken, mats, carpets, sheets etc from any window of the premises.
3. The Tenant shall not erect any external wireless or television aerial satellite dish or other like instrument on the premises.
4. The Tenant shall not keep or permit to be kept any petrol, motor spirit, gas cylinders or other inflammable or explosive material or any other material or substance in or on the premises or to do or permit to be done any act or thing which may render void or voidable any policy or policies of insurance of the Apartments, or which may cause an increase in the premium or premiums payable in respect thereof.
5. All vents provided must be opened regularly.
6. Gas cookers are not permitted.
7. Gas heaters are not permitted.
8. Storage heaters should never be covered.
9. Extractor fans must always be used when cooking.
10. Bathroom doors to be kept closed when showers are in use.
11. Sources of condensation must be controlled (do not dry clothes indoors).
12. Curtains must not be extended to the floor to allow for air circulation.
13. Clothes dryers should be condenser type only.

General

1. The Tenant is responsible for the keys to the dwellinghouse and must inform the Council of any loss or theft as soon as possible; the Tenant is responsible for the cost of replacing keys and locks to the dwellinghouse.
2. Tenant repairs must be to the satisfaction of Roscommon County Council.
3. You are responsible for the repair of any wilful or malicious damage and if the Council undertakes repairs resulting from such damages, the cost of such repairs will be charged to the tenant(s).



4. You are responsible for repairs to doors, windows, fixtures and fittings by destruction or damage by burglary, housebreaking, larceny or theft.
5. No planting of trees, hedges etc., should take place without prior permission from Roscommon County Council.
6. No Trees, hedges, etc shall be planted in such a way as to impede pedestrians and traffic management.
7. The tenant is responsible for pest control ie. rats and vermin.

End of Tenancy

1. On termination of the Tenancy the Tenant will deliver up to the Council the house in a good and tenantable condition.
2. The Tenant will remove all his/her possessions from the property and make good any damage caused by the removal of fittings.
3. The Tenant will secure the house and leave any items provided by the Council and promptly hand up the keys to an officer of the Council.
4. If the Tenant fails to remove their possessions from the house at the end of the Tenancy, the Council shall not be liable for the storage or retention of those possessions.
5. The Council shall remove and dispose of any items remaining in the property in such a manner as the Council deems fit.
6. If at the expiration of the terms of a tenancy agreement the dwelling house is not in the state of repair and decoration in which it should be, having regard to your tenancy obligations contained in this document and your agreement, you shall pay to the Council on demand the cost of putting the dwelling house into the state of repair and decoration in which it should have been had you complied with terms of the agreement. Any vandalism or damage which results in major repairs at the end of a tenancy will be recouped from the tenant.

N.B. A Tenant shall give access to the dwelling house to Council Staff at any reasonable time after receiving twenty four hours written notice of an impending visit and the production of a pass or other equivalent credentials, for the purpose of inspecting the state of the repair of the dwelling house or carrying out repairs, except in the case of an emergency when no notice shall be necessary. Likewise for routine maintenance call outs, notice shall not be necessary.



Safety in the Home

WHO INSURES ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL'S RENTED PROPERTIES?

The Council insures the structure of all rented houses against fire, flood and storm damage. N.B. The contents of the house are not insured by the Council. It is a matter for the Tenant to provide insurance cover for their personal contents if they so wish. Should you decide to buy your house, or if your house is a "vested cottage", you then become responsible for both structural and contents insurance.

YOUR HOME IS AT RISK OF FIRE FROM:

- Unattended cookers (particularly late at night).
- Cigarette Smoking.
- Matches, open fires, candles, heaters, chip pans.

THINK SAFETY FIRST:

- Be sure to keep matches, candles and lighters out of the reach of children, and do not leave young children alone in the dwelling.
- Use secure fireguards with open fires.
- Do not smoke in bed.
- Switch off and unplug all appliances not in use at night.
- Install a smoke alarm if one is not already fitted. If your smoke alarm is battery operated you should replace the battery regularly. It is preferable to have at least one smoke alarm both upstairs and downstairs.
- Only one electrical appliance should be plugged into any outlet.
- Every night, you should close doors to all rooms. Do not open a door if you suspect there is a fire in the room.
- All gas and electrical appliances should be used and serviced in accordance with manufactures instructions.
- Christmas Time - It is very important that particular care is taken with Christmas tree lights and any lighted decorations.

WHAT TO DO IF FIRE BREAKS OUT?

Your first priority is to get everyone out of the house and then to call the Fire Brigade. If your escape routes from a room are blocked by fire/smoke, close the door and stuff a blanket or carpet at the bottom of the door to keep out smoke. Call for help from the window and await the arrival of the fire brigade.

Do not evacuate from an upstairs window except as a last resort. If you have no other way out of an upstairs room, wait for the fire brigade to rescue you through the window or your neighbours may be able to obtain a ladder very quickly. If these options are not available to you and you believe your life is in danger, do not jump by standing on the window but climb out letting your legs slide down the wall while hanging from the bottom of the window, then let go. The jump will not be as far.



WHAT TO DO IF THE CHIMNEY GOES ON FIRE?

Call the Fire Brigade. Close doors and windows to reduce the draught. If possible, move furniture and carpets away from the fireplace. After a chimney fire, get an experienced builder to check it for damage and, if necessary, repair the chimney and fireplace before using it again. Fire Brigade charge will apply.

HOW TO AVOID CHIMNEY FIRES

Regular cleaning is the only way chimney fires can be avoided. The National Safety Council recommends that chimneys be swept thoroughly at least twice a year, once perhaps at the beginning of the cold weather period, i.e. after the Summer/Autumn, to clear the chimney of debris (bird's nests, etc) which may have accumulated and also to remove soot. Chimneys should also be swept mid-way through the winter to ensure a fire does not occur. Obviously, the more often a fire is lit and the more varied the fuels used, the more frequently it should be cleaned. Do not rely on chemical blocks, etc to clean a chimney. There is no better method to clean a chimney than a good sweeping.

WHAT IS THE ADVICE ABOUT OPEN FIRES?

Use a fireguard and always check that it is in position before going to bed. Never carry hot coals from one fireplace to another. Avoid banking fires too high.

SHOULD SPECIAL CARE BE TAKEN WITH GAS CYLINDERS?

Always keep cylinders upright and switch off at the regulator when not in use. Never seal ventilators, as it is important that each room with a gas heater has adequate ventilation. Do not store cylinders indoors and return empty cylinders promptly. Check flexible hoses and couplings regularly for signs of wear and tear. Keep all portable heaters well clear of curtains and furniture and place them where they cannot be knocked over. Gas or oil heaters should never be moved when in use.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHIP-PAN GOES ON FIRE?

If a chip-pan catches fire, use a fire blanket or the correct extinguisher - or smother the flames with a lid, large plate or a well-dampened towel. Do not attempt to move the pan or to use water to put out the fire. Never leave a chip-pan unattended. If you have to answer the phone/door, turn off the power and move the pan to a cold ring/hob. Because the majority of fires start in the kitchen, you are advised to consider buying a thermostatically controlled chip-pan and a fire blanket or extinguisher for the kitchen.

OLDER PEOPLE AND YOUNG CHILDREN ARE MOST OFTEN THE VICTIMS OF FIRE.



Ventilating Your Home / Eliminating Condensation and Mould Growth

Condensation is probably the main cause of dampness and mould growth in dwellings. As a result of continuing condensation, walls, ceilings and sometimes floors become damp, discoloured and unpleasant due to mould growing on them. Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface. The moistness of the air and the coldness of the surfaces depend on a range of factors, many of which are determined by the way the house is used. Condensation usually occurs in winter. This is because the building surfaces are cold, more moisture is generated within the house and, because windows are opened less, the moist air cannot escape.

Condensation, which you can see, occurs for short periods in bathrooms and kitchens because of the steamy atmosphere. It also occurs for long periods in unheated bedrooms and sometimes in wardrobes, cupboards or corners of rooms where ventilation and air movement is restricted. In order to prevent or cure condensation problems the following four precautions are very important:

- Minimise moisture production within the dwelling and confine it as far as possible to specific areas e.g. kitchen, bathroom.
- Prevent very moist air spreading to other rooms from the kitchen or bathroom.
- Provide some ventilation to all rooms so that moist air can escape.
- Provide adequate level of heating.

MINIMISE MOISTURE BY

- Drying clothes externally.
- If you are using a clothes dryer, provide venting to the outside.
- Limit the use of moveable gas or paraffin heaters as these types of heaters release large amounts of water vapour into the air and greatly increase the risk of condensation.
- Reduce cooking steam as far as possible e.g. turn on extractor fans when cooking, keep lids on saucepans, do not leave kettles boiling for long periods.

PREVENT THE SPREAD OF MOIST AIR BY

- Ventilating the room well, when cooking or when washing clothes.
- If you have an extractor fan in your kitchen, use it when cooking, washing clothes and particularly when the windows mist up.



- If you do not have an extractor fan, open the kitchen windows and keep the doors between the kitchen and the rest of the house closed as much as possible.
- After taking a bath, keep the bathroom window open and the bathroom door shut until the bathroom dries off.
- Do not use unventilated cupboards for drying clothes.
- If you have to use a moveable gas or paraffin heater make sure the room that the heater is in is well ventilated and sealed off from the rest of the house.

In older houses a lot of ventilation occurs through fireplaces and draughty windows. In many modern houses and apartments sufficient ventilation does not occur unless a window or a ventilator is open for a reasonable time each day and for nearly all the time the room is in use.

Too much ventilation in cold weather is uncomfortable and wastes heat. All that is needed is a slightly open window or ventilator. If possible, open the top part of the window about 10mm (1/2"). Try to make sure that all rooms are at least partially heated. Condensation most often occurs in unheated bedrooms. If you leave a room unheated you should keep the window open slightly and the door shut.

Heating helps to prevent condensation by warming the room surfaces. It takes a long time for the cold room surface to warm up so it is better to provide a small amount of heating for long periods than to provide a lot of heat for a short period. Houses and apartments left unoccupied and unheated during the day get very cold so, whenever possible, try to provide a small amount of heating all the time.

In houses, the rooms above a heated living room benefit from the heat rising through the floor. In bungalows and some apartments this does not happen. Some rooms are especially cold because they have large areas of outside walls. Such rooms are most likely to have condensation. Some heating is therefore necessary in these rooms.

MOULD GROWTH

If small black spots appear on the walls or other room surfaces, this is the start of mould growth. Any sign of mould growth indicates the presence of moisture. If the moisture is caused by condensation it is a sign that the level of moisture in the room needs to be reduced or that the heating, ventilation or structural insulation, or all three of them, need to be improved. The mould growth spots should be washed off and the affected areas sterilised. Mixing 1 part bleach with 4 parts water can make a suitable steriliser.

NEW BUILDINGS

New buildings can take a long time to dry out and during the first winter more heating and ventilation is necessary than in subsequent winters. Excessive temperatures should be avoided to prevent warping of new joinery.



Frozen Pipes

During periods of very cold weather when frost penetrates deep into the ground, tenants may experience problems due to frozen water pipes. The two most common sources of the problem are:

1. A frozen service pipe between the watermain and the house: - because of the depth at which it has been laid.
2. A frozen pipe in the attic: - because of inadequate lagging.

Because of the diverse nature of each individual case, it is not feasible to issue "one size fits all" advice. In general, tenants experiencing problems with frozen pipes are advised to contact their own plumber. The plumber should be able to locate the blockage and may be able to advise on ways of freeing or bypassing the frozen pipe in the short term.

Individual tips which might help to avoid frozen pipes are:

- Wrap a towel around an outside tap.
- Open the attic trap door to allow heat into the attic.
- Use a frost protection heater in attic.*
- Leave a light on in the attic.
- Leave heating on longer than normal.
- Place a piece of insulation e.g. carpet/matting over your external stopcock.
- Park a car over your external stopcock.

**use only a CE approved thermostatically controlled frost protection heater installed per manufacturer's instructions.*

In the longer term, when the thaw sets in, some of the frozen pipes will have burst and will need repair. With this in mind, tenants should familiarise themselves with the location of their stopcock, ensure there is access to the stopcock and know how to turn off the water supply to the house. Early action to turn off water will reduce the potential for damage, particularly from burst pipes in the attic.

FROZEN PIPES AND WATER TANKS

Turn off the water at the main stop cock (stop valve): this is normally found near where the water pipe enters the building, often under the kitchen sink. If there is a stop valve fitted on the outlet pipe from the header tank (the small water tank for your central heating system usually found in the attic), this should be turned off also. Do this even if you only suspect your pipes are frozen, since they could also have burst, and, by turning off the water, you will reduce the amount of water that can escape, and so minimise damage to your home.

Examine the water system for fractures in pipes and fittings for any sign of pipes being pulled from joints. Ice on the outside of a pipe is often an indication that it has burst. Before you start to thaw the system, do what you can to protect or remove anything that might be damaged by thawing water running from the burst. Cover electrical junction boxes and wiring. Switch off the central heating and any other water heating installations at the same time, to avoid further damage, or even an explosion. Begin thawing the pipe from the tap side of the frozen area, by warming it gently, and work back towards the header tank. Thaw the pipe using a



hairdryer or hot water bottle - DO NOT USE A BLOW LAMP OR HEAT GUN. Cloths soaked in hot water can also be placed on the pipe. Start at an open end and work back from it. Heat the dwelling generally with appliances not connected with domestic hot water or water-based central heating. Open all your taps to drain the system. If water is coming through the ceiling, collect it in buckets. If the ceiling starts to bulge, pierce the plaster with a broom handle to let the water through.

BURST PIPES

Turn off the water at the main stop valve. Switch off the central heating and any other water heating installations at the same time, to avoid further damage, or even an explosion. If your wiring or any electrical appliances have been affected, do not touch them until they have been checked by a professional electrician. If in doubt, turn off your electricity at the mains. If the flow of water cannot be stopped, open all the cold taps to drain the system. If the burst is on a pipe from the storage tank, turn off the stop valve in the storage tank, turn on all hot taps to drain the system, allow the fire to burn out or turn the heating off until the burst pipe has been attended to by a plumber

NO WATER AT YOUR TAPS

Do not switch on or light any water heating appliances whether fuelled by gas, oil, solid fuel or electricity. Examine the water system for fractures in pipes and fittings also for any sign of pipes being pulled from joints. The presence of ice on the outside of a pipe is often an indication that it has burst. If you notice any of these symptoms TURN OFF THE CONTROLLING STOP VALVE and call a plumber.

If no damage is visible open all taps and thaw out pipe work with an electric fan heater or hairdryer. Start at an open end and work back from it. Cloths soaked in hot water can also be placed on the pipe. Heat the dwelling generally with appliances not connected with domestic hot water or water-based central heating. If the house has to be left unattended, shut off the main stop valve and drain down whatever can be drained.

DRYING OUT

Leave windows, doors and built-in cupboards open during the day, if possible. Keep affected rooms heated, but do not over-heat them, as this could result in further damage. Store damaged items in a dry place – your own insurance loss adjuster may want to inspect them.

IF YOU ARE AWAY

Leave your heating on while you are away from home. In severe weather, or if severe weather is forecast, you should leave your heating on day and night at your usual temperature setting, especially if you are going to be away from home for any length of time. This will help to stop your pipes freezing. Open your loft trap door. This allows warm air from other parts of the house to circulate in the loft, and will help prevent pipes freezing.



Environmental Issues and Saving Energy in the Home

Regardless of where we live – the environment is an issue for us all. You can save money when you produce less waste, therefore it makes sense to reduce waste, make compost and recycle as much as possible.

As well as being a Council tenant you are also a new member of a community, this can be an ideal time to reconsider your impact on your surroundings.

Remember: less waste = less energy = saves money.

10 EASY STEPS TO A BETTER ENVIRONMENT

1. Shop for the environment ... Cut down on packaging. Buying goods and packaging that are made from recycled materials and that are recyclable
2. Do the right thing ... Recycle
3. Buy reusable shopping bags
4. Compost your waste and get growing
5. Do not tolerate litter
6. Water is life ... Think about it and conserve
7. Dispose of old paint and waste liquid properly ... Do not pour them down the drain
8. Leave the car at home from time to time
9. Save energy ... turn down and switch off
10. Choose energy efficient labels A and B

Know the 3 R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

LITTER

Remember, you are responsible for the footpath and grass verge (if any) in front of and to the side of your home. You must keep this area, as well as your front garden, clean and litter free. You should also make sure that your bins or refuse bags are securely fastened so that they do not cause littering.

PLEASE NOTE: It is an offence to place domestic waste in a public litter bin. Burning domestic waste can be considered anti-social behaviour. As well as being seriously damaging to health it is an offence under the Waste Management Acts to burn waste. You must dispose of waste properly. Dog fouling is a litter offence and a health hazard, particularly to small children playing in open areas. If you own a dog, you must clean up after it by using a bag or pooper-scooper.



ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL'S CIVIC AMENITY SITES

Roscommon County Council provide four Civic Amenity Sites in the County which take a wide variety of household waste for recycling. Sites are situated at Killerney, Roscommon town, Aghalustia, Ballaghaderreen, The Demesne, Castlerea and Termon, Boyle.

The following charges apply for entry to the Civic Amenity Sites. *

- Car & Small Van €14.00 incl. VAT per book for 4 tickets
- Car & Trailer, Large Van/SUV Small Van & Trailer €7.00 incl. VAT per ticket
- Large Van & Trailer Jeep & Trailer/SUV & Trailer €10.00 incl. VAT per ticket

Roscommon County Council pre-paid Refuse Bags (Blue Bags) retail at €6 each (incl. VAT) and can be deposited at Ballaghaderreen and Roscommon Civic Amenity Sites only. Details of sales outlets for the books of recycling tickets and blue bags tickets are available on www.roscommoncoco.ie

** Price subject to charge*

Remember to keep a copy of your receipts as proof of the proper disposal/recovery of household waste.

DISPOSAL OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE.

Refuse Collection Services

The Refuse Collection Service in County Roscommon is privatised. Collectors provide a segregated collection service, where recyclables and municipal waste are collected on alternate weeks. It is advisable to contact all domestic waste contractors listed below to confirm availability of service in your area. All authorised Refuse Collectors are required to carry their Waste Collection Permit with them at all times. The permit number must be displayed on the collection vehicle along with their name and address. **Do not use a collector who cannot show you a waste permit.**

- All waste collectors are legally obliged to provide a recycling service to domestic customers.
- Please refer to the customer guidelines issued to you by your waste contractor.
- There may be a variation in the range of recyclables accepted by each contractor.



The following table sets out details of authorised Refuse Collectors in County Roscommon:

Authorised Refuse Collectors*

Name	Address	Telephone
Joe McLoughlin	Ardcolum, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim	071-9641103
Barna Waste	Derryloughane East, Spiddal, Co. Galway	1890 300 450
AES	Cartrontroy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath	1850 650 655
WERS	Tuam Business Park, Weir Road, Tuam, Co. Galway	093-24027
Beirnes Bins	Windmill Road, Elphin, Co. Roscommon	071-9635020

* Subject to charge

Remember to keep a copy of your receipts as proof of the proper disposal/recovery of household waste.

SAVING ENERGY IN THE HOME

You can do a lot to save energy – and cut your bills – by using heat and electricity carefully and maintaining heaters, boilers and appliances.

APPLIANCES

Look for an energy rating label. Appliances are rated from A to G, according to how much energy they use. Those with an A, B or C rating use less energy than those rated near G. Though these appliances may be more expensive at first, the lower energy use will save the cost difference over their lifetime

For useful website addresses:

www.seai.ie Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

www.change.ie Energy Efficiency Website

www.enfo.ie Environmental Awareness Website



Housing Options

The Council aims to provide suitable accommodation to qualified applicants in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities. We make allocations in a fair and reasonable manner. In doing so, we hope we have satisfied your housing needs. However changes in your household circumstances may require you to review your needs, and you should, therefore, be aware of all the housing options open to you.

CAN I TRANSFER TO ANOTHER COUNCIL HOUSE?

Tenants may apply to transfer to alternative accommodation. A request for a transfer must be made in writing clearly outlining the reason(s) why a transfer request is being made.

The principal reasons for the Council having a transfer policy are:

- To make the best use of the Council's housing stock.
- To eliminate overcrowding.
- To satisfy the special needs of individual tenants where possible.

Notwithstanding the above, transfers can be refused for the following reasons:

- If the Council is satisfied that the tenants current accommodation is adequate.
- Rent Arrears
- Non-Compliance with letting agreements
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Non-Disclosure of Information
- Unavailability of suitable accommodation

The prior approval of Roscommon County Council must be obtained before a transfer is allowed.

WILL THE COUNCIL ASSIST ME IN CARRYING OUT IMPROVEMENTS TO MY HOUSE?

Where you are a tenant applying for medical reasons, or on grounds of overcrowding, the Council may consider carrying out improvements or alterations to your house.

CAN I BUY MY HOUSE?

You may apply to buy the dwelling under the Tenant Purchase Scheme. You must be a tenant for a minimum of one year before you are eligible to apply to buy the dwelling. You may contact the Housing Department for full details of the Tenant Purchase Schemes.

One or two bedroom dwellings generally are not for sale under the Tenant Purchase Scheme.

CAN I SURRENDER MY HOUSE AND BUY A PRIVATE HOUSE?

The Mortgage Allowance Scheme is designed to assist you with this, should you wish to acquire a private house and surrender your existing house to the Local Authority. You may contact the housing Department for full details of the Scheme.

CAN I CHANGE THE NAME ON MY TENANCY?

The Council may agree to a change in tenancy in certain circumstances, for example, in the case of a death, legal separation etc. If you require further information in relation to this matter you should contact the Housing Department.

WE WILL CONSIDER ANY OF THE ABOVE IF YOUR HOUSE IS IN GOOD CONDITION AND YOUR RENT PAYMENT RECORD IS SATISFACTORY.



Useful Telephone Numbers

Roscommon County Council

Housing Liaison Officer	090 6637387
Housing Rents	090 6637241/232
Housing Repairs	090 6637241/232
Environment Department	090 6637262

Family Life Centre

Boyle	071 9663000
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Family Ministry Centre

Patrick St. Castlerea.	094 9620057
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Council Area Offices

Athlone	090 6492161
Ballaghaderreen	094 9860073
Boyle	071 9662101
Castlerea	094 9620022
Roscommon	090 6637222
Strokestown	071 9633016

Family Support Services

Family Institute, Pound St., Ballaghaderreen	094 9861000
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Fire Brigade	All Areas. 112/999
Flo Gas	041 9874990

Garda Stations

Athlone	090 6492609
Ballaghaderreen	094 9860002
Boyle	071 9662030
Castlerea	094 9620019
Elphin	071 9635002
Roscommon	090 6626301
Strokestown	071 9633002

Ambulance

Boyle	071 9662026
Roscommon	090 6626130

Childline

	1800 666 666
Or text 'list' to 50101	

Citizen Information Centre

Ballaghaderreen	094 9862565
Boyle	071 9662986
Castlerea	094 9620404
Roscommon	090 6627922

Health Service Executive

Community Care Office	090 6626518
Lanesboro Rd, Roscommon	

ISPCC	090 6767960
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Community Welfare Officers

Boyle	071 9662701
Castlerea	094 9621079
Strokestown	071 9633880
Monksland	090 6492042
Roscommon	090 6627162
Ballaghaderreen	094 9860545

Money Advice & Budgeting Service

Roscommon	090 6637811
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Samaritans	1850 609090
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Vita House

Roscommon	090 6625898
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County Hospital	090 6626200
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County Library	090 6637270
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Dog Pound Mon. to Fri. 9.30-11.30	090 6662992
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Eircom	1800 400 000
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ESB Customer Supply	1850 372372
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In the case of problems arising from extreme weather conditions please log on to Roscommon County Council's web site @ www.roscommoncoco.ie for update information and contact details.