

Safety in your building

9 November 2020

Vantage Point
Berger Road,
Hackney
E9 6FG

Dear Residents,



The Hive
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Wembley
HA9 0HP

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0300 373 3000

Recent evacuation of Vantage Point

On Monday 26 October the fire service was called to Vantage Point at 7.30pm while a partial evacuation of the building was underway. They attended within minutes and quickly confirmed there was no fire, instructing residents to return to their homes.

When the fire service spoke to the concierge, inspected the building, and looked at the fire panel, they confirmed that the decision to begin an evacuation and call emergency services was correct.

Why did the alarm sound?

The investigation showed the manual call point at Boss House was activated at 7.21pm. The concierge reacted immediately and while making his way to Boss House he witnessed several youths running away from the building. We believe these youths, who do not reside at the site, managed to enter the building and activate a manual call point

In line with the current the National Fire Chiefs Council's guidance and training, the concierge managed the evacuation until the Fire Brigade attended and investigated. The Fire Brigade confirmed there wasn't a fire then silenced and reset the alarm. When a manual call point is triggered the Fire Brigade will attend, investigate, and make the decision to deactivate the panel in the event of a false alarm.

Ultimately, the fire alarm system operated effectively. Albeit sounding when someone maliciously activating the manual call point.

What are we doing going forward?

We do, of course, accept that a further alarm sounding and disruption to you all needs to be acknowledged. We are taking some additional steps to improve the communal wide system, with an intention of minimising future disruption to residents and maintaining your safety:

- Our fire alarm contractors attended and checked the alarm on the evening of the incident and confirmed it operated correctly.
- We are aware there are some faults shown on the fire panels and we are attempting to gain access to specific flats to check these faults. We ask residents continue to cooperate with our contractors in this regard. These faults are not system critical but do need to be checked.

- Some residents have asked us about the fire panel saying parts of the fire alarm is disabled. We would like to confirm the fire alarm system is operating as intended as it did on the evening of 26 October. The parts of the fire alarm that are disabled relate to interlinked smoke detection that is installed in the hallway of each flat. We have liaised with our fire engineer and confirmed the fire alarm should rely on heat rather than smoke detectors. This is to reduce false alarms. Heat detectors are installed in each flat and the fire alarm relies on these heat detectors to trigger the alarm in the event of a fire.
- We have also spoken to the Homerton Station Fire Station after the incident and will continue to work with the Fire Brigade, residents and our professional advisors to ensure fire safety is managed effectively.
- We have proactively asked the Fire Brigade to again review Vantage Point. The Fire Brigade have assessed Vantage Point previously however we felt it would be beneficial for this to happen again.
- Network are continuing to improve the alarm system and have ordered anti-tamper covers for the manual call points in the low rise buildings. We hope this will deter malicious and accidental call point activations.

Thank you all for your continued feedback, I will ensure the neighbourhood team and police continue to investigate instances of trespass into the building.

Where we have identified residents within the block letting in unauthorised visitors, legal tenancy enforcement action is underway. We do, of course, need your assistance and I would ask that everyone remain vigilant about shutting entrance doors behind them and taking ownership of who they let into the building.

There is one remaining warden as well as the concierge which has been extended to 24 hours. Between them they patrol the site hourly and I would ask that you approach them should you have any concerns about anyone congregating in communal areas.

General fire safety information

The alarm system will be **routinely tested every Friday at 4pm**.

To be clear, **if you hear the alarm sound, you should evacuate the building** – this includes if the alarm does not stop at 4pm on a Friday.

All escape routes need to remain clear, so please ensure no items are left in the communal areas. We will remove and dispose of all items in the communal areas. Flammable items such as BBQs, gas bottles, cardboard and packaging should not be stored in your home. You also should **never have a BBQ on your balcony** and try to **avoid smoking on your balcony** as the London Fire Brigade advise these are some of the leading causes of fire in blocks of flats. Last year, a fire in Barking destroyed 20 flats and this was started by a BBQ on a balcony.

Your fire strategy

Here's a recap of what to do if there is a fire in your flat, you hear the alarm or the concierge tells you to evacuate:

- Evacuate immediately closing all doors behind you as you leave your flat.

- Leave the building using the nearest staircase. This will be shown on the fire signage within your block. **Do not use the lift.**
- Call 999.
- If the fire is in your flat, you should alert the concierge so they can raise an alarm.
- If you are responding to an alarm raised by the concierge, you should follow any instructions they give you.
- Tell the concierge and Fire Brigade if any members of your household require assistance to evacuate.
- Gather at the assembly point **Pavement in Berger Road, opposite Homerton Station** (map below). Wait at the assembly point until you are told by the fire brigade/warden/concierge to return to your home.



Got a question? Then get in touch on customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk or **0300 373 3000**. Thank you again for allowing us access into your homes to make these improvements.

Yours sincerely



Sam Drinkwater
Neighbourhood Team Leader (Building Safety)