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Fire Safety in Housing
Making our Communites Safer!

Mobility Scooter Guidance for Residential Buildings

Contents

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Introduction

1. Purpose of this Guide

1.1. This guide outlines considerations for responsible persons of residential buildings to help establish the safe use, storage and charging of mobility scooters. It focusses on commonly found situations. There may be alternative solutions of achieving the protections set out in this guide.

1.2. It is recognised that the use of mobility scooters can enhance the quality of life for many older or less mobile residents, who otherwise may be limited in their ability to access common facilities provided in the premises and also access external facilities in the wider community. However, for some people, the use of mobility scooters is more of a lifestyle choice and their use is not critical to their continued independence.

1.3. With the increased use of mobility scooters, comes the corresponding fire safety concern associated with their storage and charging. The design of many premises, particularly smaller and older premises, does not always lend itself easily to the safe storage and charging of mobility scooters. The lack of space and the layout of the corridors, lifts and stairways in communal areas mean that individuals will often leave scooters adjacent to their front entrance doors on protected escape routes or within protected stairways.

1.4. When a mobility scooter is involved in fire, the risk of harm is significant. In residential buildings, mobility scooter fires can pose a life safety risk to tenants, employees, firefighters and other relevant persons.

1.5. This guide therefore considers a range of relevant factors to enable responsible persons to develop proportionate and risk based policies that act as an enabler to prevent injury and reduce risk to all relevant persons in the event of a fire, to promote independence and to comply with all relevant fire safety and health and safety at work legislation. For new buildings the provision of suitable spaces for storage and charging of mobility scooters should be considered at the design stage.

1.6. Statistically, the number of fires involving mobility scooters is low; however the consequences when fires happen are particularly devastating. Using the Fire Information and National Data System, (FINDS notice), and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Communities Forum, information regarding fires that have involved mobility scooters was gathered. There were responses from UK Fire and Rescue Services, including fire investigation reports and Local Authority policies.

2. Intended Audience

2.1 This guide is particularly aimed at those who manage, give advice or enforce standards in residential buildings. The guide will also be helpful to those who undertake fire risk assessments of such buildings.

2.2 Typically, these groups will include:

- Landlords
- Local Authorities
- Managing Agents
- Facility Managers
- Health and Safety Managers
- Resident Committees
- Fire and Rescue Enforcement Teams
- Tenants
- Leaseholders
- Fire Risk Assessors

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3 Scope of this guide

3.1 This guide therefore considers a range of possible options and risk reduction measures that those responsible for premises, risk assessors and enforcing authorities can consider as part of the overall fire risk assessment for individual premises.

3.2 There has been a marked increase in the use of mobility scooters throughout the housing sector. Mobility scooters are now commonly used by residents and, for some residents with severe mobility problems, scooters are the only means they have of being able to travel beyond the front door of their own accommodation. Therefore it is intended is that this guide will be used for all residential buildings.

3.3 In 2017, The Office for National Statistics has reported that the UK has an increasing ageing population and the trend is predicted to increase in the future. It can therefore be expected that mobility scooter usage will increase over time.

3.4 The number of fires involving mobility scooters in England and Wales remains relatively small based on the limited statistical information available. The number of fires recorded includes fires in mobility scooters that occur when scooters are stored or charged outside the premises may present less of a risk, although it is recognised that, even when fires occur outside, there remains a potential for fire to spread into a building, so placing residents at risk. Certainly, the most common causes of fires in mobility scooters are faults with electrical equipment/wiring, charging equipment and arson.

3.5 From the statistical information available, there have been some fatalities and many others rescued from fires involving mobility scooters, see Appendix 2 for further information. The root causes of these fires have been deliberate and accidental, internal and external to buildings and many of these incidents have involved fires spreading through doors and windows. These fires have not only caused deaths and injuries but also disruption to occupants and neighbours through redecorations costs and mobility issues.

4 Key legislation and guidance

4.1 Whilst mobility scooters are currently not regulated in the UK, the primary legislation relating to mobility scooters includes:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Use of Invalid Carriages on Highways Regulations 1988

Information and guidance on mobility scooters is also noted within other publications such as:

- BS EN 12184:2014
- Fire Safety in Purpose Built Block of Flats Guide
- NFCC Specialised Housing Guidance
- Care Quality Commission (CQC) Fire Safety Information and Guidance Note 422
- RC59 “Risk Control: Fire safety when charging electric vehicles” 2012 published by the Fire Protection Association on behalf of RISC Authority
- House of Commons Transport Committee, Mobility scooters, Ninth report of session 2009-10.
- Department of Transport: Mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs on the road.

4.2 Information and guidance for tenants is noted in Appendix 1.

4.3 This guide recommends that all new mobility scooters should be manufactured in accordance with BS EN 12184:2014 Electrically powered wheelchairs, scooters and their chargers. Requirements and test methods.

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5 Classes of vehicle

5.1 Mobility Scooters are defined as an "Invalid Carriage" under the Use of Invalid Carriages on the Highways Regulations 1988 in which they are divided in to three categories:

Class 1 Vehicles

Manually operated wheelchairs not electrically powered.

Class 2 Vehicles

Powered Wheelchairs and mobility scooters for pedestrian routes and indoor use, that are limited to a maximum speed of 4mph and do not exceed an unladen weight of 113.4 kg.

Class 2 vehicles are not allowed on the public highway and are not required to be registered with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

Class 3 Vehicles

Powered vehicles and mobility scooters that are designed to:

- Travel up to 8mph and are used on roads/highways and;
- Fitted with a device to restrict travel to a maximum speed of 4mph on pedestrian routes and for indoor use.

Class 3 Vehicles must not exceed an unladen weight of 150 kg.

Class 3 vehicles are not classed as motor vehicles but they are required to be licensed with the DVLA for road use and cannot be operated by anyone below the age of 14.

5.2 For the purposes of this guide, Class 1 vehicles (manually operated wheelchairs with no fairings, batteries or motors) are excluded from the references to fire tests, fire loading etc. References to obstructions on means of escape still apply.

6 Definitions

6.1 **Invalid Carriage**

"A vehicle, whether mechanically propelled or not, constructed or adapted for use for the carriage of one person, being a person suffering from some physical defect or disability."

6.2 **Communal Area**

"Any internal area within a building which is shared or is accessed by more than one person e.g. corridors, cupboards, lounges etc."

6.3 **Disabled Person**

"Any individual with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

6.4 **Escape Route**

"Route forming part of the means of escape from any point in a building to the final exit." Usually including corridors, stairs and doors.

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PART A: fire safety considerations

Section Summary

- ✓ 36 recorded mobility scooters fires, with 66% of incidents related to arson.
- ✓ Mobility scooter temperatures can reach 375°C within 3 minutes and 556°C within 8.5 minutes.
- ✓ Multiple mobility scooters can exponentially increase heat release rates.
- ✓ Escape routes will fill with dense toxic smoke.

7 Understanding the risk

7.1 Mobility scooters involved in a fire can release large volumes of smoke and generate significant heat outputs. If mobility scooters are stored on escape routes and are involved in a fire, there is a potential that escape routes will become impassable and residents could be placed at significant risk in the event of a fire. Therefore, appropriate measures must be considered within the building fire risk assessment to address the risks posed by the storage and charging of mobility scooters.

7.2 Mobility scooters are often stored outside and not in a secured compound, giving potential for deliberate ignition. This has then allowed for fire spreading through windows and doors, into buildings and internal compartments, and has led to fatalities.

7.3 Further research is included in Appendix 3.

8 Fire loading

8.1 Mobility scooters are generally constructed around a steel frame, with plastic fairings, rubber tyres, foam seats, wiring and batteries. They are often retro fitted with vehicle registration number plates, waterproof covers and storage bags.

8.2 The type of batteries used in mobility scooters are generally lead acid (wet cell) or sealed lead acid scooter batteries. Other battery types include Gel and Absorbed Glass Mat (AGM) batteries.

8.3 The recent use of lithium iron phosphate (LiFeP04) batteries instead of lead acid batteries to power mobility scooters has increased risks due to their unpredictable and adverse reaction when subjected to fire. All batteries can give off hydrogen when charging.

9 Heat release rate

9.1 The Research noted in appendix 3 has shown that, within 3 minutes of ignition, the temperature of the mobility scooter reached 375°C. Between 5 and 8 minutes after ignition the compartment temperature rose from 54°C to 181°C and continued increasing to 214°C, after 8.5 minutes (with the mobility scooter itself reading 556°C).

9.2 In separate research, where several scooters are burning simultaneously, the fire is exacerbated by heat-feedback and the heat release rates in excess of 2.5MW can be achieved from two scooters. In the BRE experiment noted in appendix 3, one scooter burned slowly for about 3 minutes before the second scooter became involved. The temperatures and heat release then rose rapidly and a substantial quantity of smoke was produced.

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10 Toxic smoke

10.1 In tests, compartment fires involving mobility scooters show that the smoke layer within a 3m high room falls to 2m from the floor after just 3 minutes, and that thick black smoke extends to just 1m from the floor after 8 minutes. The smoke is dense and is given off in large quantities even at relatively low temperatures; filling compartments with toxic smoke, possibly before an occupier would notice the fire. The construction materials of some mobility scooters can produce large volumes of smoke more quickly than would normally be expected.

11 Occupants

11.1 Given the speed of temperature rise and rapid volumetric smoke production, occupants would need to evacuate very quickly to escape unharmed. A fire in a mobility scooter that is being stored within common exit routes would render conditions untenable in less than 3 minutes. It is evident that a fire involving mobility scooters, within an escape corridor or stairwell, will create a substantial risk to occupants since the smoke and heat will make such routes impassable and put occupants at risk.

12 Means of escape

Section Summary

- ✓ Escape routes should be kept clear to enable all relevant persons to evacuate quickly and safely.
- ✓ The storage of mobility scooters should be fully risk assessed ensuring it does not compromise the means of escape.
- ✓ Report any damage to any fire protection measures e.g. fire doors or any structural parts of the building to the landlord.

12.1 A person's ability to escape a fire will be affected by smoke and heat. Smoke not only reduces visibility, but can, because of the toxic gases and irritants in the smoke, cause incapacitation. High temperatures and radiant heat from the flames will also affect people's ability to escape.

12.2 Recognising these hazards and providing necessary protections to secure the safe escape of occupants underlies fire safety design in all buildings. It applies equally to dwellings as to other buildings.

12.3 Storage and use of mobility scooters in residential buildings can also pose other safety concerns to relevant persons and cause damage to the building such as fire doors and walls which could impact on the fire safety measures within the building. Such risks should be considered as part of the building fire risk assessment and steps taken to address such issues as they arise. In some cases competent advice may be required to ensure fire safety is not affected.

12.4 In the event of a fire, people react differently and it is important that escape routes, are kept clear at all times to ensure that all persons can reach a point of safety as quickly and as safely as possible.

12.5 Mobility scooters place a significant "fire loading" on the escape route(s) and in the event of a fire, present significant risks to all relevant persons.

12.6 Protected escape routes could become untenable due to smoke and fire and could put relevant persons (still within their flats) at risk of significant harm.

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13 Storage and charging

Section Summary

- ✓ Manufacturer's guidelines should be followed.
- ✓ Ensure that any storage area within a building is of at least 30 minutes' fire resisting construction and has early warning systems available if the building has a common fire alarm or some way of monitoring this detection.
- ✓ Removing the battery from the mobility scooter will remove the source of ignition.
- ✓ Restrict charging at night, from 8pm to 8am – this will reduce the risk to those who are a sleep.
- ✓ Any charging in designated storage areas should be subject to portable appliance testing and subject to a risk assessment

13.1 Tenants should ensure that they follow any manufacturer guidelines or instructions on the safe use and charging of their equipment.

13.2 When determining storage solutions for mobility scooters the following questions should be considered:

- Is there sufficient detection in place within the proposed storage area to provide early warning to others in the event of a fire?
- If the building is not staffed and fire detection is available for the proposed storage area, is the system monitored?
- Can a fire be restricted to the room of origin?
- Can all persons reach a place of relative or ultimate safety?
- Are there sufficient electrical sockets available?
- Can charging time be restricted to minimise sleeping risk?
- Are there any other combustible materials in the vicinity?
- How many scooters can be stored safely within the proposed storage area?
- Is access and egress sufficient for mobility scooter use?
- Does the solution affect other residents?
- Is storage and charging in-line with manufacturer recommendations?

13.3 Separating the battery from the mobility scooter can reduce the risk, by removing the source of ignition. It should be noted that some mobility scooters are not designed to have the battery removed and this maybe difficult for some users of these scooters

13.4 In all residential buildings, the landlord should have policies in place to ensure that tenants keep any personal belongings within their property, and this may include mobility scooters. Responsible persons should complete a thorough risk assessment and carefully ensure that any policies requiring mobility scooters to be stored within individual properties do not put tenants at undue risk. Please refer to Part C of this guide for further information.

13.5 Where the risk assessment identifies that the domestic dwelling is not suitable e.g. where a tenant's own means of escape from their dwelling could be affected, then other areas of the building should be considered. This should include assessing existing rooms or areas within the grounds where reasonable adjustments can be made to store scooters.

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13.6 Any electrical sockets provided in any designated storage area should be suitable for the charging taking place, should not put occupants at increased risk when they are likely to be asleep and conform to the manufacturer's instructions. This should form part of the risk assessment. Possible options could include restricting the power supply between the hours of 8pm and 8am or by using timers that restrict the duration of charging.

13.7 Any charging that is undertaken within any designated storage area should be subject to an appropriate portable appliance-testing programme and subject to risk assessments.

14 External storage

Section Summary

✓ External storage solutions should be fully risk assessed, giving consideration to arson, location, construction, fire spread, access/egress and maintenance.

14.1 An assessment should be carried out to consider the following:

- Arson risk
- Construction and fire spread
- Any impact on external escape routes
- Electrical installation
- Location, access and egress
- Maintenance
- Monitoring

14.2 It is recommended that any mobility scooter storage solution should be sited at least 6m away from buildings to reduce fire spread; however, the risk assessment should take all factors noted in sections 12, 13 and 14.1 when considering suitable and appropriate external storage solutions.

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PART B: Will my building support a managed approach?

15.1 The provision of safe storage and charging facilities in some premises will prove difficult and, in certain locations, it may not be physically possible to provide suitable storage or charging facilities, either internally or externally. In these situations, it is recognised that, owing to the size, design, layout and access to the building, it may not be possible to allow residents to store or charge mobility scooters in these locations.

15.2 The layout and design of each building will be different; the type, number and location of mobility scooters will also differ and the needs of individual residents should be considered as part of the overall assessment of risk. A solution that might be appropriate in one building may not be acceptable in another. Likewise a solution that might be appropriate for one resident may not be appropriate for other residents. Although external storage could be considered as an option, the vulnerability and mobility of residents may make it impracticable for them to utilise external facilities.

15.3 Many landlord and housing providers apply policies that prevent mobility scooter storage in residential buildings that are not staffed and where in the main tenants are not vulnerable, this is because these buildings have been identified as not being designed in a way that supports safe storage or charging, or if storage solutions have been identified they may meet any maximum capacity set for the building. In all cases where such policies exist, this should be identified as part of the fire risk assessment for the building and recorded.

15.4 In specialised housing, especially where schemes are staffed, a managed approach could be more effective at meeting resident's needs however the fire risk assessment should determine this.

15.5 The options detailed below present a solutions based approach that could be applied to any mobility scooter situation identified, any one of which might be acceptable in the right circumstances.

15.6 Where, in the following options, there is reference to fire-resisting construction and fire-resisting doors, the period of fire resistance should normally be 60 minutes, except where an area contains no more than three mobility scooters or is provided with automatic fire suppression, in which case 30 minutes' fire resistance will normally be adequate.

Option 1: External parking with charging facilities:

The parking of mobility scooters outside premises is potentially an option. In most instances, it would be expected that a charging facility would be provided adjacent to the parking area. Security and the risk of arson would need to be considered, as would the location normally a minimum of 6m away, which should not present a risk of fire spread into the building in the event of a fire.

Option 2: External storage with charging facilities:
The provision of purpose-built secure storage and charging facilities (including individual storage units), or the conversion of existing external facilities, such as garages or storerooms, to provide storage and charging facilities, might be considered. Dependent on their location and proximity to the building, such facilities may need to be fire-resisting enclosures and may also be fitted with automatic fire detection if they can be monitored.

Option 3: Purpose-built internal storage rooms:
The provision of purpose-built rooms inside premises for the storage and charging of one or more mobility scooters need to be enclosed in fire-resisting construction, and be fitted with fire-resisting, self-closing doors and automatic fire detection.

Option 4: Adapted internal storage rooms:
The provision of specifically adapted rooms inside premises for the storage and charging of one or more mobility scooters might be an option. Rooms would, as a minimum, need to be enclosed in fire-resisting construction, and be fitted with fire-resisting, self-closing doors and automatic fire detection.

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Option 5: Existing fire-resisting rooms utilized for storage:
The storage and charging inside rooms, not originally designed for this purpose but which are separated from the remainder of the premises with fire-resisting construction and self-closing fire doors, might be considered. This may include options to utilise storerooms, utility rooms, on a permanent or temporary basis. In these instances, the use of the rooms, or clearly separated areas, might need to be restricted to the storage and charging of mobility scooters and not combined with other uses.

Option 6: Storage and charging within residents' own accommodation:
Suitable storage and charging arrangements might be possible inside the accommodation of individual residents. This option removes the risk from the common areas, and it places the storage and charging of scooters within a fire-resisting enclosure beyond a fire-resisting, self-closing door. However, this potentially places individual residents at risk from a fire involving a mobility scooter in their own home. If this option is considered, the scooter should not be stored or charged in the hallway, if this is the only means of escape available. The scooter should, preferably, be stored and charged in a separate room, which is fitted with a fire-resisting or substantial door and fire detection. Residents should be provided with advice on the safe use and charging of scooters as part of a person-centred approach.

Option 7: Internal storage in other areas:
If mobility scooters are stored in any other areas not mentioned in the above options must be thoroughly fire risk assessed in conjunction with the local Fire and Rescue Service and the housing provider. Compensatory factors that might be considered could, for example, include some or all of the following: the provision of an automatic sprinkler or watermist system, a comprehensive fire detection and alarm system (which is automatically linked to an alarm receiving centre), adequate smoke ventilation (to keep flats smoke free), alternative means of escape available from all flats that open directly onto the escape route in question, or the use of scooters with limited flammability. The appropriate combination of measures should be determined by the fire risk assessment for the premises.

15.7 The Responsible Person should ensure the maximum numbers of mobility scooters identified for the premises is in the Fire Risk Assessment. Residents should be aware of local arrangements which will help to future proof mobility scooter storage issues in buildings.

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PART C: Management considerations

Section Summary

- ✓ Ensure consent/permission is given to tenants to store any mobility scooter.
- ✓ Ensure that tenants have insurance cover and are maintaining the equipment in line with manufacturer recommendations.
- ✓ Ensure any designated areas are maintained and are fit for purpose for storage and charging.
- ✓ Ensure an appeals process exists and report any fire incidents to the regulator.

Ensure any alterations consider fire safety and any building regulation requirements.

16 Consent/Permissions and Insurance

16.1 In all cases responsible persons should ensure they give permission and consent for a tenant to store a mobility scooter within a building. Responsible persons should also reserve the right to refuse storage where none of the options in this guidance are suitable and/or this would breach legislation or impact on the health, safety or welfare of other occupants within the premises.

16.2 Responsible persons should ensure that procedures are in place to highlight any organisational mobility scooter policies and conditions of permission (to new and existing tenants). No mobility scooters should be stored in premises where permission or consent has not been given or where any policies or legislation is breached.

16.3 Expectations should also be appropriately identified and supported within tenancy agreements and communicated to tenants.

16.4 Appropriate insurance cover should be in place by tenants that covers liability for damage or injury to others. Contents insurance alone is not sufficient to provide third party cover (should any damage occur to the premises or to another person).

16.5 Responsible persons should not give permission if appropriate insurance cover is not in place for the equipment being used.

17 Maintenance and testing

17.1 Tenants should ensure that mobility scooters are maintained in line with manufacturer recommendations; this should include mobility scooter usage and charging.

17.2 Responsible persons should ensure that appropriate maintenance and testing regimes are in place to ensure any designated storage areas are fit for purpose and offer effective fire protection, including:

- Fixed wiring installation testing
- Portable appliance testing of equipment
- Fire detection maintenance and testing
- Fire doors and fire door furniture
- Emergency lighting
- Ventilation
- Inspection of floors, walls or ceilings

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18 Alterations

18.1 Any alterations made to existing premises should be reasonable and proportionate. It is possible that not all requests now or in the future can be catered for in buildings. Therefore, responsible persons should identify the capacity of their buildings to cater for mobility scooters and communicate this with tenants where appropriate.

18.2 Any alterations made should be risk assessed and all fire safety considerations considered prior to any alterations being made.

18.3 Any material alterations considered may also require Building Control approval.

19 Local considerations

19.1 The demands and uses placed on buildings can vary significantly (based on building design, fire strategy, occupancy and behaviours). Therefore, a one-size fits all (or prescriptive approach) will provide neither a reasonable nor proportionate approach in managing risk.

19.2 Responsible persons should set expectations with tenants on any local rules for the premises. Any local rules implemented should be clearly communicated to tenants and monitored.

19.3 While the Fire and Rescue Authority regulates the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Regulators' Code places an expectation on the Authority to work with local businesses and provide support.

20 Appeals

20.1 As noted in Part A and B, it is important that responsible persons identify where a building is suitable and what maximum capacity of mobility scooters a building can accommodate, taking into account any fire safety/local considerations.

20.2 Responsible persons should have procedures in place for when permission or consent is refused. In such cases, there should be an appeals process that tenants can follow.

21 Incident reporting

21.1 Responsible persons should ensure that appropriate reporting procedures exist so that relevant persons are able to report any incidents that could have an impact on the health, safety or welfare of other persons.

21.2 In the event of any fire incident involving a mobility scooter (however small), in addition to informing your local fire and rescue service, a report should be made to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) who are responsible for regulating medical devices which includes mobility scooters. The make and model of the scooter involved will be required as well as the details of the incident.

To report an incident please visit the following website: https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/

In addition, responsible persons should ensure a review of the buildings fire risk assessment is made following any fire incident.

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Appendix 1 – Tenant information

There are many factors to consider when deciding on whether residential buildings will support tenants having mobility scooters. As a baseline to all buildings, no storage or charging of mobility scooters on any escape route is allowed. However alternative solutions may be available, check the policy for your building with your landlord before purchasing a scooter.

Before choosing a mobility scooter, it is important that you consider your needs. Although users of mobility scooters are less likely to be in the best of health it is, nevertheless, still important that they are fit to use one, especially if they will be using it on the road and/or pavements, amongst many other people and vehicles.

Before buying a mobility scooter it is important that you take time to consider your options as this may save you time, effort and resources later on. There are many different types and you need to find one that is suitable for your needs i.e. size, height, weight and restricted movement.

- Set your budget, including the cost of the vehicle, insurance and breakdown cover, maintenance, servicing and repairs and any adaptations required. Funding from charities may be available. For those in receipt of the higher mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance, enhanced rate of the Personal Independence Payment, War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement or the Armed Forces Independence Payment, the Motability Scheme may allow for the benefit to be put towards the cost of leasing or buying a scooter.
- It is recommended that you choose a dealer experienced in assessing customer needs. Avoid buying from an untrained sales person. Some vehicle suppliers are members of the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA).
- Check whether the dealer can offer appropriate training.
- Ask if scooters/vehicles can be hired to gain experience before making purchase.
- Consider your budget limit and whether you wish to buy new or second hand.
- Make sure you are familiar with all the controls on the scooter/vehicle before buying and taking it home.
- Check whether there are instructions; second hand scooters may not have them.
- Ask if there is a warranty, what this covers and the duration of the warranty.

Visit www.charitychoice.co.uk or www.guidestar.org.uk for contact details of charities that may assist with funding.
Visit www.motability.co.uk for more information on the Motability Scheme.

Visit www.BHTA.net for more information regarding the British Healthcare Trades Association.

It is important that your scooter is properly maintained. This will prolong its life and reduce the risk of fire and mechanical breakdown. The manufacturer's handbook will tell you how often your scooter should be tested.

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Appendix 2 – Case studies

Date: 2008

Fire Authority: Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service

Details:

A fire in a care home in Lincolnshire was caused by a power surge to a mobility scooter which was being stored inside. The mobility scooter ignited and the fibre glass construction was described as having a blow torch effect, burning through a 60 minute fire resisting compartment ceiling. This incident was followed by a similar fire in the south of Lincolnshire which saw the fire and rescue service implement a policy that states that all mobility scooters are serviced which is to include the charging unit.

Outcome(s):

The care home, which mentioned above has now fitted an electrical circuit specifically for the mobility scooters, which only operates between 09:00 and 19:00 each day.

Date: 2008

Fire Authority: Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service

Details:

A fatal fire within a three storey block of flats in Leicestershire was investigated by the local fire and rescue service. The most severe fire damage was restricted to the back door in the kitchen where a mobility scooter had been stored. The development of the fire was mainly due to the combustible materials on and adjacent to a mobility scooter. As the scooter was positioned against the wooden back door this in turn became involved on fire. The ceiling and wooden joists burned through. The scooter had failed two days previously and another scooter had been used to push the broken down scooter several hundred yards.

Outcome(s):

An electrical fault on the mobility scooter was believed to have started the fire even though the scooter was not plugged into the charging unit.

Date: 27/02/2010

Fire Authority: Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

Details:

The double fatal fire occurred at 02:58 whilst the occupants were sleeping. The mobility scooter was being stored outside the property and the occupants were awoken by a noise outside. An orange glow could be seen through the front door. On arrival of the fire and rescue service the fire was well developed and so intense that fire had spread to the canopy area above the scooter.

Outcome(s): Arson

Date: September 2016

Fire Authority: London Fire Brigade

Details:

Attended a fire in a four storey sheltered accommodation block. Five appliances attended the fire caused by a mobility scooter being charged in a communal area. Preliminary findings indicate a fault within the charging point of the scooter. Three people were led to safety by London Fire Brigade wearing breathing apparatus with eight people suffering from smoke inhalation

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Appendix 3 - Technical standards and other publications

- Fire experiments on mobility scooters protected by sprinklers, BRE May 2016
- Heat release and smoke production from burning mobility scooters, BRE May 2016
- EN7176 – series - the internationally accepted series of standards that describe the various testing methods for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Part 16 defines the resistance to ignition of upholstered parts – requirements and test methods.
- 2014/35/EU - Low Voltage Directive.
- Medical Devices Directive 93/42/EEC - The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) regulate the implementation of the EC Medical Device Directives in the UK.
- EN12182 2009: Assistive products for persons with disability – General requirements and test methods.
- EN12184 2004: Electrically powered wheelchairs, scooters and their chargers – Requirements and test methods.
- EN 60601-1 2006: Medical electrical equipment Part 1, General requirements for basic safety and essential performance.
- EN14971 2012: Medical devices application of risk management to medical devices.
- EN12814 - Testing of welded joints in thermoplastics semi-finished products.
- MHSWR: 1999, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.
- ISO 7193:1985, Wheelchairs — Maximum overall dimensions.
- FMVSS 302, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 302 — Flammability of Interior Materials2008/16H/EC.
- 97/28/EC, adapting to technical progress Council Directive.
- 76/756/EC, the installation of lighting and light-signalling devices on motor vehicles and their trailers.
- 2008/164/EC, technical specification of interoperability relating to 'persons with reduced mobility' in the trans-European conventional and high-speed rail system.
- Office of National Statistics: Overview of the population July 2017 (https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/overviewoftheukpopulation/july2017)

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Acknowledgements

The National Fire Chiefs Council's Mobility Scooter Working Group and the National Social Housing Fire Strategy Group have engaged with a sector led group of stakeholders, partners and suppliers comprising:

National Social Housing Fire Strategy Group	NSHFSG
National Fire Chiefs Council	NFCC
NFCC Fire Engineering and Technical Standards Committee	FETS
Midlands Social Housing Fire Strategy Group	MSHFSG
Wales Social Housing Fire Strategy Group	WSHFSG
Midland Heart	MH
Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service	SFRS
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service	GMFRS
London Fire Brigade	LFB
Sanctuary Housing	SH
Orbit Group	OG
Hanover Housing	HH
Bromford Group	BG
The Community Housing Group	CHG
Horizon Medical	HM
Building Research Establishment	BRE
Lewisham Homes	LH
Mid and West Wales Fire Service	

This guidance will be kept under review and may be updated periodically. Please ensure you have the latest version.

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