

Reducing Fire Risk: Best Practice for Mobility Scooter Storage

Mobility scooters are considered a serious fire risk as they have been found in several instances to self-ignite due to battery or wiring faults caused by poor manufacturing or lack of maintenance. This risk is further compounded by the increasing use of lithium-ion batteries which can develop into serious fires if damaged or overcharged, a scenario that can easily occur if an incorrect replacement battery or charger is fitted, for example.



What You Need to Know

The Fire Safety Act 2005 places an obligation on Landlords to ensure the safety of tenants from fire and FRAs are undertaken regularly. Inspectors have the power to issue enforcement notices and even close a scheme down. Failure to act could lead to prosecution for criminal negligence in the event of a fire occurring.



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

The National Fire Chiefs Council have issued statutory guidance on storing and charging mobility scooters in residential buildings. To find out more visit <https://bit.ly/3cau9rK>

Your Options

The National Fire Chiefs Council issued statutory guidance regarding safe storage, allowing for four potential outcomes:

1. Scooters can be kept within a user's flat, as long as their means of escape is not obstructed, charging is not conducted at night-time, and the battery is disconnected when not in use. This should be considered carefully when preparing Personal Evacuation Plans.
2. Dedicated internal scooter rooms can be provided but must be compartmented with fire detection, sprinklers, and fume extraction. The risk of smoke spreading is still present if doors are wedged open.
3. Secure external storage should be considered if other options are not available. These must be located at a safe distance from dwellings to ensure that residents are not put at risk.
4. Scooters are not to be permitted on the scheme if the above options cannot be met, and this may result in users having to be moved to alternative accommodation.

10-Point Plan for Effective Mobility Scooter Storage



1. Internal stores

The NFCC guidance states that scooters must not be stored indoors unless within a **compartmented section of the building of at least 30 minutes' fire-resisting construction** fitted with fire detection and recommends sprinklers and fume extraction.

Any charging in designated storage areas should be subject to portable appliance testing and a risk assessment, including ensuring that the scooters are not charged between the hours of 8pm and 8am.



2. Flats and homes

The landlords **must ensure that the means of escape is not obstructed**. This should be considered in Personal Evacuation Plans. Research suggests that most scooter fires occur during storage – it is recommended the batteries are disconnected when not in use.



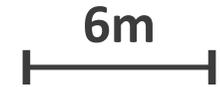
3. Corridors

The NFCC guidance states that mobility scooters should **never be stored in communal areas** such as corridors, stairwells, or lounges due to the risk of self-ignition.



4. External stores

If you have eliminated all internal storage options for mobility scooters, then **external storage may well be the solution**. They are valuable items and are sometimes subject to arson attacks so they should be locked within a robust, weatherproof enclosure.



5. Safety distance

The NFCC guidance recommends that mobility scooters are not stored within 6m of the building, but this can of course be difficult to achieve on confined sites so we recommend measuring this **from any point where a fire could enter the dwelling** (door, window, air vent, boiler flue, soffit or combustible cladding material).



6. Restricted Spaces

If it's impossible to achieve this safety distance, scooters must be secured within a structure providing **30 minutes fire resistance**. This could be a masonry structure or a proprietary unit, ensuring that all parts of the structure including the roof and any doors meet the specified level of fire resistance.



7. Accessibility

A further key requirement is to ensure that the **store can be reached safely by all users**. The facility should be as close to the building entrance as possible without compromising fire safety guidelines and provided with well-lit access paths, compliant ramps, and handrails on any changes of level.



8. Convenience

It will be challenging for mobility scooter users with reduced mobility to access an external storage facility, but this **must be balanced with the need to maintain the safety of all residents**. The challenge can be mitigated by providing automated access doors and increasing the width of the store to give space for users to transfer from wheelchair to scooter.



9. Budget costs

As an approximate guide, we recommend you allow £4,000-£5,000 per scooter, including all necessary groundwork, electrical connections, and all relevant consents. Providing storage for every user may be unrealistic, but **creating a basic level of provision will reduce the risk for landlords**. It also provides a framework to manage who has a scooter, where they store it, and how they pay for this storage and electricity used.



10. Rental

Many landlords charge a **nominal rental fee of £5 per week** to help cover the costs of providing compliant storage and charging facilities for mobility scooters.