

Communal Areas: Director's Briefing

Communal areas are any areas over which there is a degree of control, but other parties such as tenants or members of the public may have access. It is important to understand who has control and what coordination and cooperation needs to be in place to ensure risks are reduced and managed effectively.

What are the key risks areas associated with communal areas?

These relate to the need for clarity on who has control over them and include:

- slips, trips and falls
- lighting
- water hygiene
- asbestos management
- housekeeping
- fire safety
- use of lifts
- use of escalators/travelators
- building security.

Case Study

The managing agents of a mixed use commercial building have responsibility for the rear shared service corridor which serves a number of the ground floor retail units. Several retailers are using the service corridor for storage, particularly at times of high demand. This obstructs the fire escape routes. Both the managing agent and the retailers can be served notices or prosecuted by the fire authority.

How should the risks be managed?

The key is ensuring all parties know who is responsible for what:

- determine the areas over which you have direct control and those areas over which you have a degree of control or responsibility in conjunction with other parties
- identify who is responsible for what and record it
- establish and implement inspection regimes for the areas over which you have direct control
- establish and implement maintenance regimes for the communal areas and common building plant and equipment.

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