



salix h:mes

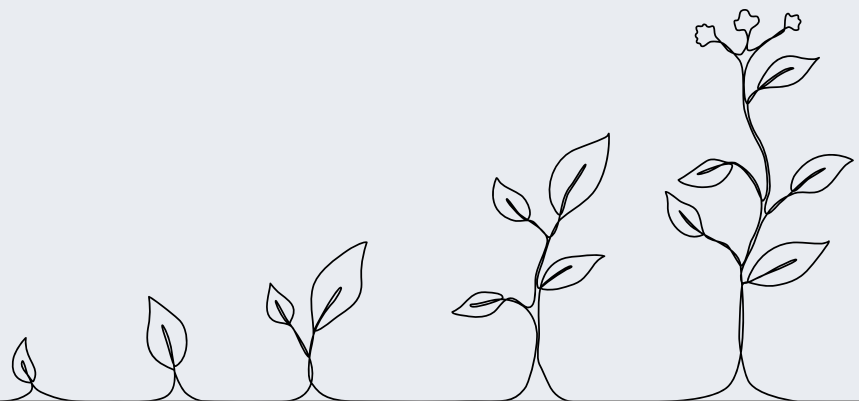
## Building Safety at Salix Homes

*The story so far...*

live • grow • thrive • together

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## Introduction

### **At Salix Homes, we take building safety seriously.**

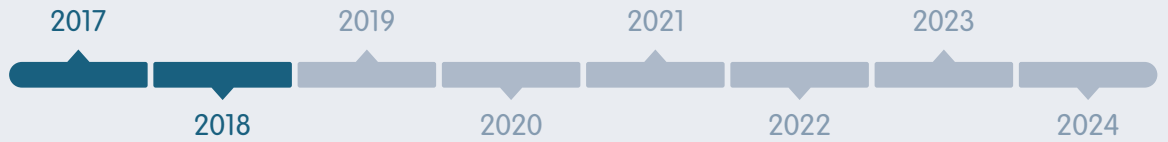
We own 20 high rise buildings across Salford, and since the Grenfell Tower tragedy, we've been at the forefront of building safety - raising safety standards within our own properties, advising government bodies on future recommendations and piloting and implementing the reforms in the new Building Safety Act.

We were also one of the very first housing associations to achieve Building a Safer Future Charter Champion Status - a national benchmark, awarded in recognition of our commitment to building safety and culture change.

However, we also recognise that building safety is continuous journey, and with the Building Safety Regulator now established, and new duties, laws and safety standards in place, we're committed to continuing to work closely with the wider housing sector, our housing partners across Greater Manchester, the Government, safety experts, and of course our customers, to ensure all our buildings are safe places to live, both now and in the future.

Want to know more?  
Visit the building safety  
pages on our website:





## Grenfell – the immediate aftermath

The Grenfell Tower tragedy is a moment in time that'll never be forgotten, when 72 people lost their lives in the most tragic of circumstances.

We had eight high rise buildings which had failed cladding systems and we moved quickly to implement changes and carry out a significant programme of safety enhancement work to ensure the safety of our customers and their homes.

In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy in **June 2017**, we began removing the cladding from our affected buildings, until an alternative solution was developed. We also implemented round-the-clock security and additional patrols as a precautionary measure to provide additional reassurance for our customers.

## An Early Adopter

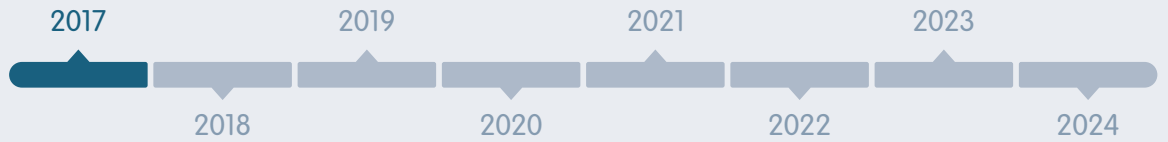
In **2018**, we were one of a handful of housing associations to become an Early Adopter, set up by the then Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), tasked with working with the Government and other decision-making bodies to help test new ways of working, which would then shape the new building safety regime.

Our key role as an Early Adopter has seen us advising, trialling and testing the recommendations of Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. We were also instrumental in the development of the National Building Safety Charter and the consultation process on the new Building Safety Act.

We also hosted Dame Judith during a visit to Salford where she met with our customers in a bid to learn more about their experiences.

Find out more:





“ Everything that needed to be done, Salix has done, and I now feel safer in my home. ”  
*Salix Homes customer*

## Customer voice

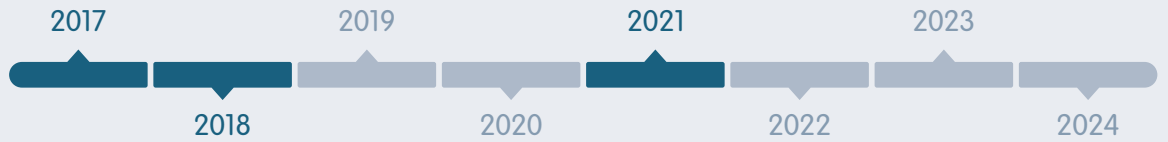
The interim report into Dame Judith Hackitt’s review released in **December 2017** acknowledged a need for better engagement between landlords and residents.

Salix Homes already operated an effective customer engagement programme, however ahead of the review, we launched our High Rise Living Forum to complement our existing engagement programme and provide our customers with an additional, dedicated platform to get their voices heard.

This has since evolved into our Apartment Living Forum – a dedicated panel of high rise residents helping to inform our approach to building safety.

Not only did Grenfell shine a spotlight on building safety, but it also accentuated the importance of listening to, and crucially acting upon, customers’ views. Throughout our building safety programme, we’ve ensured customer voice has been central to delivery. We’ve been open and honest from the start – telling customers exactly what we’re doing and why, keeping them informed and engaged with transparent and accessible communications every step of the way.

The impact our building safety work has had on customers is life-changing. One high rise customer said: “The thought you’re living in an unsafe building is always there in the back of your mind. I’m really pleased with the work that has taken place. Everything that needed to be done, Salix has done, and I now feel safer in my home.”



## Cladding remediation and safety enhancement

Salix Homes has an excellent track record in fire safety; however, we were determined to raise the bar of fire safety and establish a new standard of safety across all our blocks.

In **summer 2017**, we began to enhance safety measures in all our high rise buildings, this included installing new state-of-the-art fire alarm systems and sprinklers.

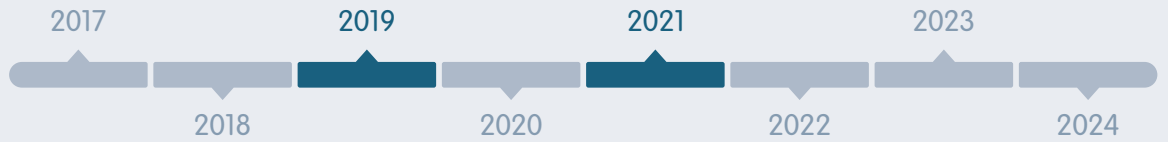
We worked closely with technical experts to develop a permanent solution to replace the cladding systems in our eight affected buildings, which meet the highest of safety standards.

Our cladding remediation programme began in **2018** and followed the principles of the reforms in the Building Safety Act. We successfully developed, piloted and implemented many of the new measures, sharing our learnings with the wider sector along the way.

These included:

- Establishing annual building safety inspections to high-rise buildings
- Introduced a Mandatory Occurrence Reporting system
- Establishing a dedicated Building Safety Directorate

In **2021**, we completed the multi-million-pound cladding remediation programme, along with extensive safety enhancements across all our tower blocks. We now have sprinkler systems in nine of our 20 high rise buildings, with another five scheduled within our 2024/25 investment programme, and the remaining blocks to follow.



Find out more:

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## Safety Standard Promise

In 2019, we launched a new standard of safety for our high rise buildings, as part of our commitment to raise the bar of building safety.

The ‘Safety Standard Promise’ pulled together a range of measures we’d implemented, including dedicated Property Safety Officers, state-of-the-art fire alarm systems and a clear process for customers to report any concerns.

## Building Safety Team

As part of our Building Safety Directorate, we have a dedicated Building Safety Team, whose role is to help keep our customers and our buildings safe.

Within the team are Property Safety Officers, who aim to be familiar faces for our high rise customers. They provide additional reassurance and answer any questions or safety concerns from customers. They carry out regular safety inspections, arrange fire alarm testing and deal with any potential safety hazards or fire risks, as well as ensure the general fire safety of the block is being maintained.



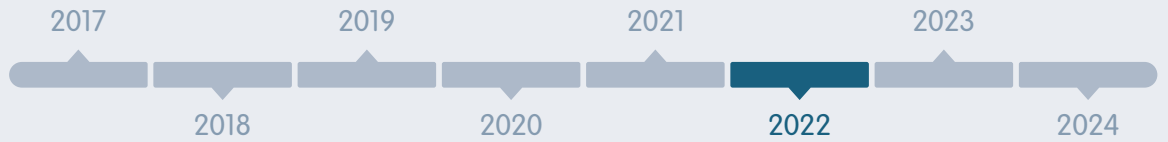
*We were impressed to learn how Salix has applied building safety initiatives to all buildings, embedding culture change. This contributes to bringing about a behavioural shift throughout the company, by building ownership and responsibility for building safety. Dame Judith Hackitt*



## Dame Judith Hackitt commendation

Dame Judith Hackitt, Chair of the Industry Safety Steering Group (ISSG), has commended Salix Homes for our commitment to fire and building safety.

Following the completion of our cladding replacement programme in 2021, in a letter to Salix Homes she said: “As a social housing provider, it was clear to the ISSG that you have made a concerted commitment to address building safety. It was evident to us that there is a sense of genuine responsibility to put things right, supported by Salix Homes’ participation in the Early Adopter programme.”



## E-bike safety campaign

On the morning of **December 27, 2022**, a fire broke out in one of our tower blocks.

At the height of the incident, there were six fire engines and dozens of firefighters, as smoke and flames billowed from a 10th floor window. Thankfully, no one was hurt. Several floors were safely evacuated, and crews successfully extinguished the fire, containing it to the flat where it started.

No-one ever wants to test a building’s fire safety measures in a real-life situation – however, this was the ultimate test, and it was reassuring to see the extensive measures we’d implemented performed exactly as they are designed to, this included the early warning alarm system which alerted the fire service directly.

Thanks to the sterling efforts of the fire service, along with the building’s safety measures, the fire, while devastating, was contained to the flat where it originated.

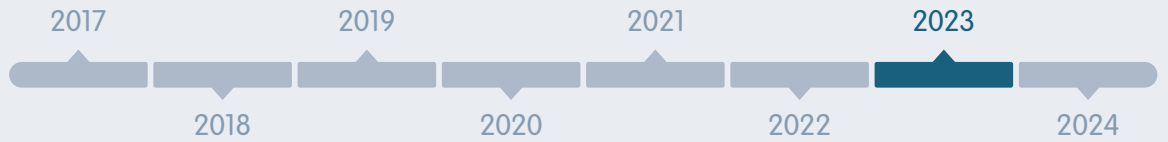
However, the cause of the fire presented a new and growing risk for housing associations and our customers - it was started by a faulty e-bike battery that had been charging in the bedroom.

In response, we launched an e-bike safety campaign to warn customers of the potential dangers and provide guidance to ensure they’re being used and charged safely and responsibly.

The campaign also garnered interest on a national scale – we’ve been invited to talk about the issue at key sector events and have also shared our learnings and best practice with other housing providers who have since gone on to deliver similar safety campaigns.







## Building a Safer Future Charter Champion

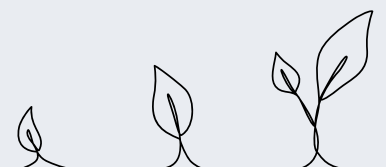
In **March 2023**, Salix Homes became one of the first housing associations to be awarded **Building a Safer Future Charter Champion** status, having successfully completed **BSF's new building safety culture change assessment scheme**.

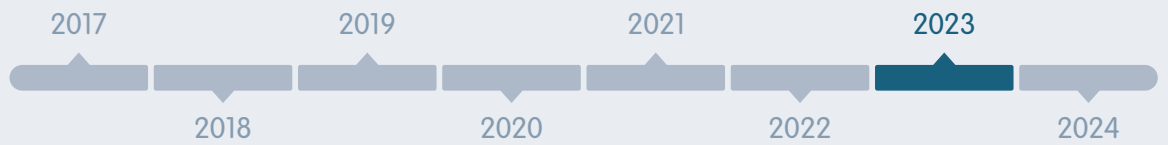
The BSF Charter Champion assessment is a robust benchmarking and verification process launched by the Building a Safer Future (BSF) Charter to help organisations drive the systemic culture change required to put building safety first.

We're committed to doing everything in our power to ensure the safety of our customers and our buildings. As a small landlord of 8,000 homes and 20 tower blocks, we're proud to be leading the way.

However, this has never been about accreditations or being the first past the post. This is about doing the right thing for customers. The BSF Champion status marks another step forward on our building safety journey, and another step towards ensuring that people living in high rise and high-risk buildings are safe, and feel safe.

Find out more:





## Open the door to safer homes

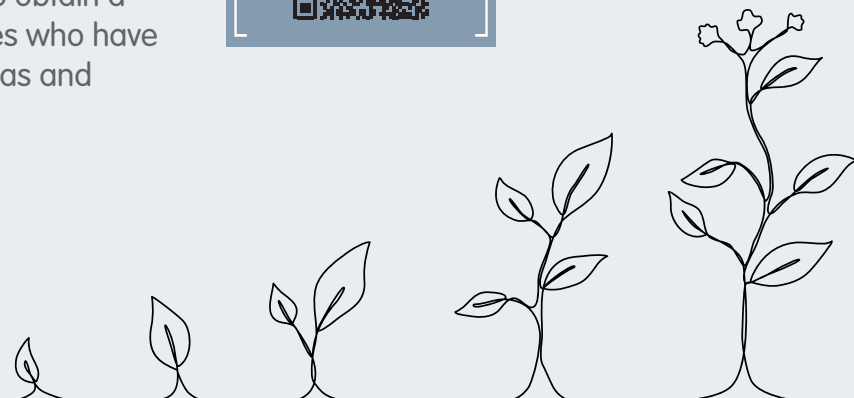
In **November 2023**, to coincide with **National Social Housing Safety and Compliance Week** we launched our **Open the Door** campaign.

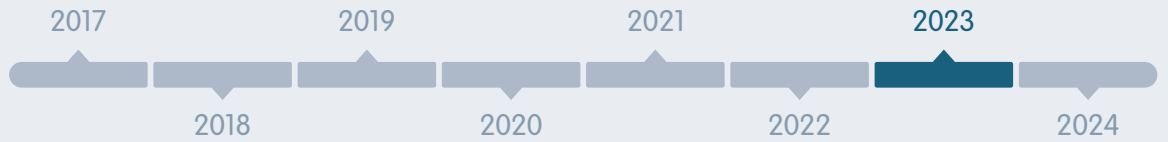
The campaign urged customers to 'Open the Door' to ensure we can carry out regular safety checks or repairs in their homes, which includes essential gas and electrical inspections.

Every year, Salix Homes spends more than £100,000 pursuing legal action to obtain a warrant to access people's homes who have refused to allow us to carry out gas and electrical safety checks.

In addition to the safety implications, it's also a huge burden on time and resources to pursue legal action through the courts – money that could be better spent on other services.

Find out more:





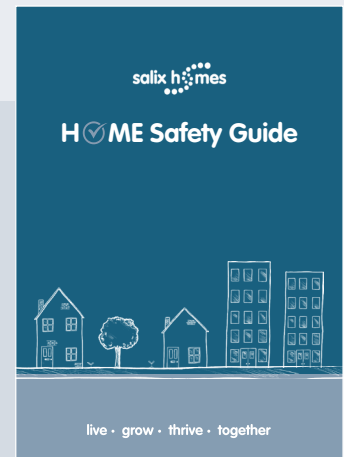
## Home Safety Guide

In **2023**, we launched a new Home Safety Guide for customers with essential information, tips and advice about keeping safe in the home.

It includes information about fire safety, electrical and gas safety, water hygiene, asbestos and damp, mould and condensation.

It also explains the different checks we carry out to ensure customers' safety, and how they can let us know if something isn't right.

Accessibility is a key priority, so the Home Safety Guide can be viewed via the Recite Me accessibility tool on our website offering read-aloud functionality, multiple screen reading aids and styling options, as well as on-demand translation for over 100 languages.



## Leading the way

**Salix Homes has become synonymous with the drive for building safety, championing calls for a seismic-shift within the industry to ensure there can never be another Grenfell.**

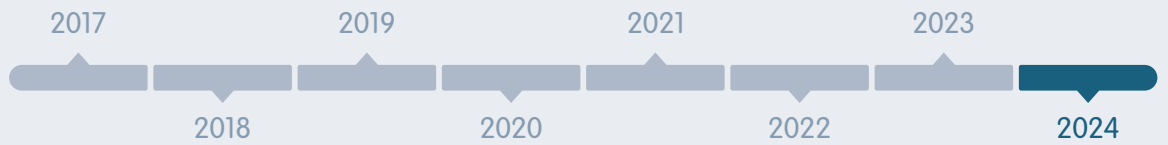
We've positioned ourselves as ambassadors for the cause, openly sharing our experiences, speaking at sector-wide events and hosting building safety roadshows to help spread the word.

As part of a stakeholder survey conducted in 2023, one stakeholder told us: "Salix Homes has been highly visible champions for building safety and have actively shared their experiences of tackling cladding remediation and other building safety challenges."

Our actions to drive forward fundamental reforms in the built environment will help ensure people's safety is always put first in the planning, designing, building, refurbishment and maintenance of high rise buildings on a national scale.

*Salix Homes has been highly visible champions for building safety and have actively shared their experiences of tackling cladding remediation and other building safety challenges.*

**Salix Homes stakeholder**



Find out more:

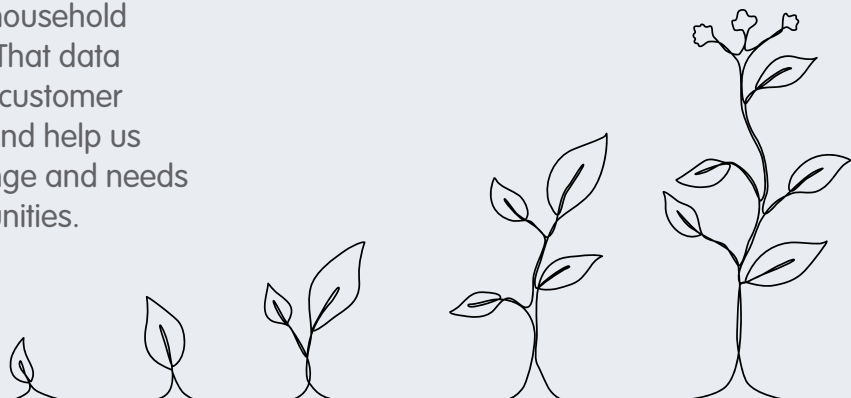
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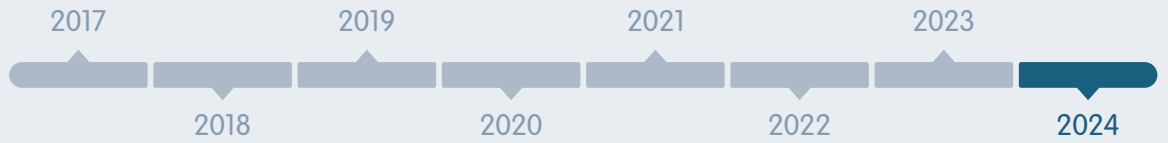
## Month of action

**During February 2024, we held a High Rise Month of Action across all our tower blocks. We carried out home visits and hosted communal drop-in events, where we completed essential safety checks and audits, and were also able to have meaningful discussions with our customers about their priorities and concerns, so we can tailor our services accordingly.**

We also used the opportunity to advance our Getting to Know You campaign, whereby we are contacting all our customers to learn a little more about them and their household to ensure our data is up to date. That data is being used to help us improve customer access to services and support, and help us better understand the diverse range and needs of the people living in our communities.

Throughout the month-long initiative, we completed 186 home visits and spoke to more than 350 customers. The comments, insight and feedback has fed directly into our new Building Safety Customer Engagement Strategy, and has helped shape our neighbourhood action planning process.





## A new building safety regime

**With the new building safety regime now in place, Salix Homes is working hard to meet the requirements and ensure that all our properties are safe and great places to live.**

For our customers, we want them to feel safe in their homes, as well as feel informed about building safety and empowered to challenge decisions and get involved in discussions.

We're successfully steering a shift within our own organisational culture to embed the ethos that everyone is responsible for building safety, from the top downwards. Everyone is encouraged to report safety concerns and can be confident we'll listen.

In **Spring 2024**, we launched our Building Safety Customer Engagement Strategy, which puts our customers firmly at the centre of our approach to building safety. It's important to us that we consider customers' insight and lived experiences, so their comments and feedback has fed directly into the strategy.

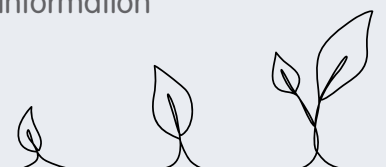
We are working openly and transparently with our customers and partners and inviting

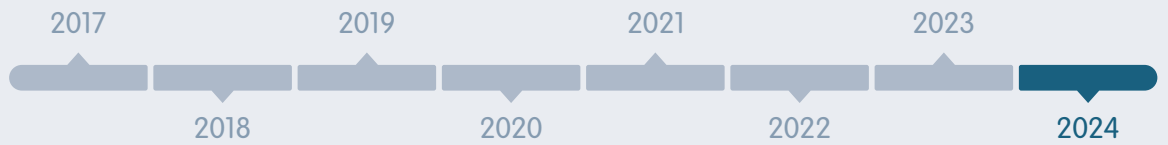
feedback on the strategy and will be regularly monitoring its effectiveness to ensure it continues to meet everyone's needs.

In addition to this overarching strategy, we are also working closely with customers to create tailored Customer Engagement Plans, specific to each of our 20 high rise blocks and the people who live there, taking into consideration things like disabilities or languages spoken.

In line with the Building Safety Act 2022, it's now a legal requirement that we share key safety and building information with customers, just as we're sharing our Building Safety Case Reports with the Regulator.

Some of this information is very detailed and technical so we have summarised all the key bits to make it as easy as possible for customers to access and understand in a language and format that suits them. We've created a dedicated area on our website, where customers can access information about their block.





Find out more:

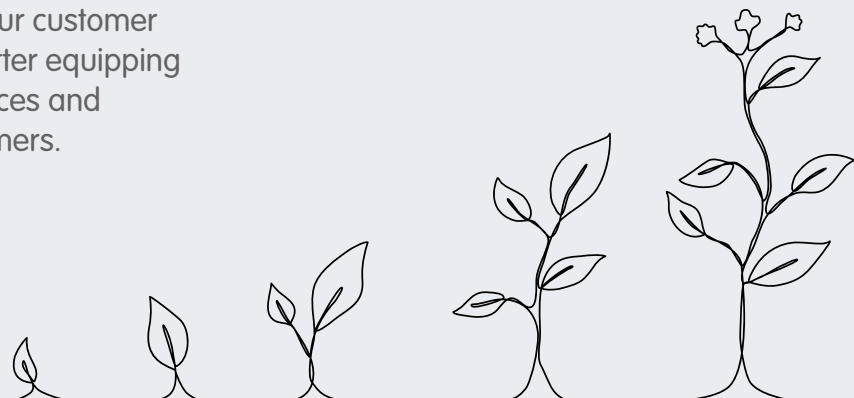
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## What's next?

**With the Building Safety Regulator now established, and new duties, laws and safety standards in place, we're working hard to deliver the requirements of the Building Safety Act and secure and retain building certificates for all our high rise buildings.**

We're reviewing our property standards and adopting a data driven approach to the management of our assets. We're getting to know our customers and their homes better, we're improving and analysing our customer and property data, and we're better equipping our workforce to deliver our services and meaningfully engage with customers.

Salix Homes has been leading the way on building safety – and we've made great strides, not just for our own customers, but on a national level. However, while we're well ahead with implementing the fundamental changes of the new building safety regime, we acknowledge that it is an ongoing journey. We remain committed to continual learning and improvement, and building safety remains at the forefront of our corporate priorities.







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