

HEALTH AND SAFETY  
GUIDANCE NOTE  
**FIRE SAFETY**



**NFU Mutual**  
Risk Management Services

## INTRODUCTION

Every year the Fire and Rescue services attend a large amount of fires. Each fire that occurs brings with it the potential for fire related deaths and injuries, not to mention huge financial implications due to fire and water damage etc.

Fires can kill or injure people in a number of ways, such as:

- The heat from a fire directly affecting people by physical burns, inhalation of superheated air which can burn the lungs and heat stroke;
- Smoke inhalation and inhalation of toxic gases;
- Injuries from falls, crush injuries or injuries as a result of broken glass, falling structures or contents, etc.

People involved in fires can also suffer from post-traumatic stress.

Most fires are preventable. If you are responsible for workplaces or buildings to which the public have access, you can reduce the risk of a fire by taking responsibility for and adopting the right behaviours, preventive measures and procedures.

## WHAT ARE MY LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES?

The duty to manage fire safety is included in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (England and Wales), the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. The main duty is placed on employers and those who have control over premises (e.g. property owners, landlords and managing agents).

The legislation is relevant to:

- Industrial and commercial premises;
- Residential accommodation such as holiday chalets and caravans or which is let via a tenancy agreement;
- Common areas of blocks of flats (except in Scotland);
- Campsites and marquees, as well as open air events and venues (such as zoos and festivals).

This specific legislation does not cover:

- Single private dwellings (which may or may not employ domestic servants);
- Worker housing and tied accommodation that is in a separate building from the workplace.

Responsibility for complying with the fire safety legislation rests with the 'responsible person'. In a workplace, this is the employer and any other person who may have control of any part of the premises (e.g. the manager or owner). The responsible person can be an individual or can be the 'body corporate' or organisation. If there is more than one responsible person in the premises (e.g. in a multi-occupied premises), then all the responsible persons must co-operate and co-ordinate with each other as far as is reasonably practicable.

In summary, if you are the 'responsible person', your duties are to:

- Carry out a fire risk assessment;
- Consider who may be especially at risk;
- Eliminate or reduce the risk from fire as far as is reasonably practicable and provide general fire precautions to deal with any residual risk;
- Take additional measures to ensure fire safety where flammable or explosive materials are used or stored;
- Create a plan to deal with any emergency and, in most cases, document the findings;
- Review the findings as necessary.

The Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002 relate to the risk(s) associated with dangerous substances which could, under normal atmospheric conditions, form a flammable or explosive atmosphere. The specific requirements of these regulations are covered in a separate Guidance Note, however the substances they relate to should be included in your fire risk assessment where relevant.

**Enforcement** – In the majority of premises the local Fire and Rescue Authority are responsible for enforcing fire safety legislation, however the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has enforcement responsibility for construction sites, nuclear premises, and on ships under construction or undergoing repair.

Nb. If you have a Fire Certificate issued under previous legislation, this no longer has effect but is likely to provide a good starting point for your fire risk assessment.

## HOW DO I CARRY OUT A FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT?

A fire risk assessment will help you to determine the chances of a fire starting and the dangers from fire that your premises presents to the people who use them and anyone else in the immediate vicinity.

There are five steps to carrying out a fire risk assessment:

- 1 Identify fire hazards** – these may include
  - Sources of heat / ignition, e.g. electrical equipment, welding etc.;
  - Fuel - e.g. wood, cardboard, flammable substances or gases etc.;
  - Oxygen.
- 2 Identify people at risk** – this includes people in and around the premises, and particularly those especially at risk, e.g. people with disabilities etc.;
- 3 Evaluate and reduce the hazards and risks** – consider the risk of a fire occurring and the risk to people from fire. Remove or reduce the fire hazards present and reduce the risks to people by implementing fire safety measures such as detection and warning systems, fire-fighting equipment, escape routes, lighting, signs and notices and maintenance of fire safety equipment;
- 4 Record and train** – Write down the significant findings of your assessment and the action taken, prepare an emergency plan, discuss with other responsible persons and provide training to your workers. A copy of your Fire Risk Assessment should be kept in the workplace and made available to your permanent workers (and their official representatives where applicable), and to the employees of other employers with access to the premises;

**5 Review** – Carry out a review periodically, but also when the situation changes or when an issue highlights that the fire risk assessment may not be suitable and sufficient (e.g. a fire or arson attack).

If you employ five or more people, your premises are licensed or if your premises are subject to an alterations notice that requires a documented fire risk assessment, then you **MUST** record:

- The significant findings of the fire risk assessment;
- The actions to be taken as a result of the assessment; and
- Details of anyone especially at risk.

However, you will probably find it helpful to keep a record of the significant findings of your fire risk assessment even if you are not required to do so by law.

**Higher risk premises** – Unless you have a high-level of in-house expertise, it is essential to obtain competent assistance when completing a fire risk assessment for high risk premises, as specialist knowledge and experience will be required. In fire safety terms, higher risk premises are considered to be:

- Sleeping accommodation (e.g. bed and breakfast accommodation, hotels or holiday lets);
- Premises where there are large numbers of people (e.g. wedding venues, festivals or public attractions);
- Premises where large amounts of flammable or combustible substances are produced, stored or used.

You should check the credentials of any competent person that you employ to carry out requirements made under fire safety legislation.

## HOW CAN I CONTROL THE RISKS FROM FIRE?

Now that you have identified the risks, you can take appropriate action to control them. Always consider first whether you can avoid them altogether or, if this is not possible, how you can reduce the risks and manage them. Also consider how you will protect people if there is a fire.

Some practical ways to control risks include:

- Controlling your sources of ignition, e.g. hot works, kitchen equipment, smoking areas etc.;
- Keeping sources of ignition and flammable substances apart – use supplier safety data sheets as a source of information about which substances might be flammable;
- Reducing the amount of flammable/explosive substances you store on site, where possible;
- Ensuring safe storage, use and transportation of gas cylinders;
- Avoiding accidental fires, e.g. controlling smoking areas and making sure portable heaters cannot be knocked over;
- Carry out maintenance on your electrical installation and equipment;
- Ensuring good housekeeping at all times, e.g. avoid build-up of rubbish, dusts and greases etc.;
- Providing a means of detecting fires and fire warning systems, e.g. installing smoke alarms and fire alarms or bells;
- Installing the correct fire-fighting equipment for putting a fire out quickly, e.g. fire extinguishers, hose reels etc.;
- Keeping fire exits and escape routes clearly marked and unobstructed at all times;
- Ensuring your employees receive appropriate training on procedures they need to follow, including fire drills;
- Carrying out fire safety inspections, e.g. checking for blocked fire doors, obstructions along exit routes etc.

**Testing and Maintenance** – It is important to keep any fire safety equipment, devices or facilities, e.g. fire alarms, fire extinguishers, lighting, signs, fire exits and fire doors, in effective working order and maintain fire separation, e.g. fire doors, to prevent fire and smoke entering escape routes. You should also carry out regular checks, servicing and maintenance. These routines are often specifically described in a relevant British Standard (e.g. BS 5839 for fire alarms).

A few typical inspection templates are provided to assist you at the end of this guidance note.

**Fire Emergency Plan**– When putting together your fire emergency plan, the purpose of the plan must be to ensure that the people in the premises it relates to will know what actions to take if there is a fire. It must also ensure that appropriate action is taken in the event of a fire, to enable the premises to be evacuated safely.

The emergency plan should cover the following:

- How people will be warned;
- Action people should take in the event of a fire;
- Arrangements for calling the Fire and Rescue Service;
- Isolation of hazardous energy sources, e.g. electricity, gas lines etc.;
- Fire alarm activities;
- Evacuation procedures;
- Assembly points;
- Fire-fighting arrangements;
- Procedures for meeting the Fire and Rescue Service on arrival;
- Re-entry to the building.

The extent of detail in the fire emergency plan will depend on the type of premises and occupancy. Your fire risk assessment should assist you in determining the detail required for your plan. For specific information, please see the separate Guidance Note on Emergency Procedures.

Fire drills should be held on a regular basis, e.g. once or twice a year, to ensure that the plan is followed and remains suitable for your premises. The plan should also be reviewed on a regular basis.

## INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

As a minimum all people at work, whether full time, part time, permanent, temporary, agency or volunteer status should be given fire safety training. Typically that would include the following:

- Actions to take on discovering a fire;
- Actions to take on hearing the alarm;
- The items listed in the emergency plan;
- The importance of fire doors and other basic fire preventive and protective measures;
- Information on fire-fighting equipment;
- Exit routes, to include physically walking the routes;
- The location of the assembly point and the importance of reporting to it;
- Other information, such as fire hazard control, smoking policy, safe use of cooking facilities etc.

Additional training will be required to cover any specific roles, such as fire marshals.

People undertaking any specific fire safety responsibilities, including those conducting the fire risk assessment, appointed as fire marshal(s), designated to use an evacuation chair, conducting inspection and maintenance of fire systems etc. must be competent to do so. A competent person is defined as someone with enough training, experience, knowledge and other qualities to be able to implement the measures properly.

It is important that workers are appropriately supervised. Effective supervision can help you monitor the effectiveness of the training that people have received, and whether employees have the necessary competence to do the job.

## FURTHER GUIDANCE

There is a range of government-produced guidance to assist you in complying with fire safety legislation, including the writing of your fire risk assessment and provision of general fire precautions. Specific guides are available for:

- Offices and shops;
- Factories and warehouses;
- Sleeping accommodation;
- Animal premises and stables;
- Residential care premises;
- Educational premises;
- Small and medium places of assembly (up to 300 people);
- Large places of assembly;
- Theatres, cinemas and similar premises;
- Open air events and venues;
- Healthcare premises;
- Transport premises and facilities;
- Means of escape for disabled people.

These guidance books are available for free download at:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-law-and-guidance-documents-for-business](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-law-and-guidance-documents-for-business). In addition, there is separate industry guidance for fire safety at caravan and camp sites.

## FIRE DRILL RECORD TEMPLATE

A fire drill should be held at least once and preferably twice a year and a record kept of every drill.

Fire Drill Record	
Date of drill:	
Type of drill:	
Number of staff involved:	
Optimum evacuation time:	
Actual evacuation time:	
Time to completion of roll call:	
Assessment of drill:	
Remedial action necessary:	
Person responsible for drill (print name):	
Any other comments:	
Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____	

## FIRE ACTION NOTICE

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### FIRE ACTION NOTICE

#### IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE

- Sound the alarm by operating the nearest fire alarm break glass call point/ shout warning of FIRE immediately.
- Call  to alert the Emergency Services.
- Attack the fire with a suitable extinguisher ONLY IF YOU HAVE BEEN TRAINED AND IT IS IT IS SAFE TO DO SO using the fire appliances provided.

#### IF THE FIRE ALARM SOUNDS

- Leave the building immediately by
- Close all doors behind you.
- Report to the assembly point at



- Do not take risks.
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings.
- **Never re-enter the building for any reason unless authorised to do so.**
- Do not take risks.

## MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

Equipment	Interval	Action Required
Fire detection and fire warning systems, including self-contained and manually operated devices.	Daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Visual check of fire alarm panel and remedy of any identified faults</li> </ul>
	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check for state of repair and operation</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Repair or replace defective parts</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Test operation, including self-contained alarms and manually operated devices</li> </ul>
	Six monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Service and test by a competent engineer</li> </ul>
Emergency lighting, self-contained units, generators and torches.	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check all lights and torches for state of repair and correct functioning</li> </ul>
	Annually (or advised by an electrical contractor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Service and test by a competent engineer. Replace batteries in torches</li> </ul>
Fire-fighting equipment, including hose reels.	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check all equipment for correct installation and apparent function</li> </ul>
	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Service and test by a competent engineer</li> </ul>

In addition, sprinkler systems, dry/ wet risers, smoke vents, fire dampers, fireman's' switches, lightning conductors, private hydrants, oxygen displacement systems, fire shutters, fossil fuel boilers, electrical equipment and fixed electrical wiring should all be subject to testing and maintenance by a competent person.









## FIRE SAFETY AUDIT FORM

1	Fire Exit Routes	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Are routes easily identifiable?			
b.	Are routes free from obstruction?			
c.	Can fire doors be opened easily?			
d.	Are all self closing devices operative?			
e.	Are all fire exit routes marked on fire plan?			
f.	Are they all unlocked when premises are open?			
g.	Free from external obstructions?			
2	Fire Extinguishers	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Sited on escape routes?			
b.	Sited adjacent to exit doors?			
c.	Grouped to form fire points?			
d.	Wall mounted in prominent position?			
e.	Away from extremes of temperature?			
f.	Serviced in last 12 months?			
g.	Correct extinguishers sited by the fire hazard?			
h.	Accessible and unobstructed by storage etc?			
3	Control of Waste (Skips and Bins)	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Frame members are straight and undamaged.			
b.	Waste bins/skips at least 10 metres from the building?			
c.	Correctly used (relevant material in appropriate bin)?			
d.	Lids securely in place?			
e.	Oil/liquid waste in bunded areas away from the building?			
f.	Waste burning prohibited?			
g.	Waste removed regularly?			
4	Housekeeping	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Are the premises clear of process waste? Are storage areas adequate and tidy?			
c.	Are separate containers provided for flammable or other special waste?			
d.	Is flammable waste removed at least daily?			
e.	Are no smoking rules in force and complied with?			
f.	Are there suitable containers for the disposal of smoking materials?			
5	Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Are LPG cylinders that are not in use stored in an outdoor caged area and locked overnight?			
b.	Is the store used only for LPG storage?			
c.	Is the store at a suitable distance from buildings, boundaries and the third party properties?			
d.	Are permanent safety warning notices displayed?			
e.	Are the cylinders stored with the valve set uppermost?			

6	Flammable Liquids	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Are bulk supplies in a purpose built store?			
b.	Is the store secure?			
c.	Is there adequate high and low level ventilation?			
d.	Are liquids moved in safety containers?			
e.	Are flammables kept away from sources of ignition?			
7	General Fire Prevention	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Are all heating appliances fixed and clear of combustibles?			
b.	Are trailing electrical cables kept to a minimum and protected where necessary?			
c.	Are there adequate electrical sockets?			
d.	Are there permit to work systems for contractors hot work?			
e.	Are automatic sprinkler installations tested and maintained?			
8	Emergency Lighting	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Covering all exit routes and associated signage?			
b.	All lamps are lit?			
c.	The control panel indicates normal i.e. No faults?			
d.	Tests and inspections at recommended intervals completed and recorded?			
9	Evacuation Plan	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Plan up to date with clear instructions?			
	Clearly displayed throughout?			
c.	Communicated to all personnel?			
d.	Fire wardens appointed and adequate?			
e.	Fire assembly areas clearly marked, safe and made known to employees/visitors etc.?			
10	Record Keeping	Yes	No	N/A
a.	Written record of fire risk assessment?			
b.	Weekly fire alarm test records?			
c.	Electrical inspection and testing records (portable and fixed)?			
d.	Emergency Lighting Tests?			
e.	Fire training (induction, drills, use of extinguishers etc) recorded?			
f.	Statutory inspections?			

Comments:

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