



**Fire Industry Association**

# Best Practice Guide to Fire Safety



# Fire Industry Association Best Practice Guide to Fire Safety

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# Introduction

Every year people die or are seriously injured as a result of fires in non-domestic properties. Besides the human risk, fire costs UK business millions of pounds due to property damage, fines, compensation, and insurance premiums. Many businesses find that they are not able to recover from the effects of a fire.

- Who is responsible for fire safety in non-domestic premises?
- What are their duties and responsibilities?
- How can I keep people and property safe?
- What are the possible consequences of failure to act?
- Where can I get help and guidance?

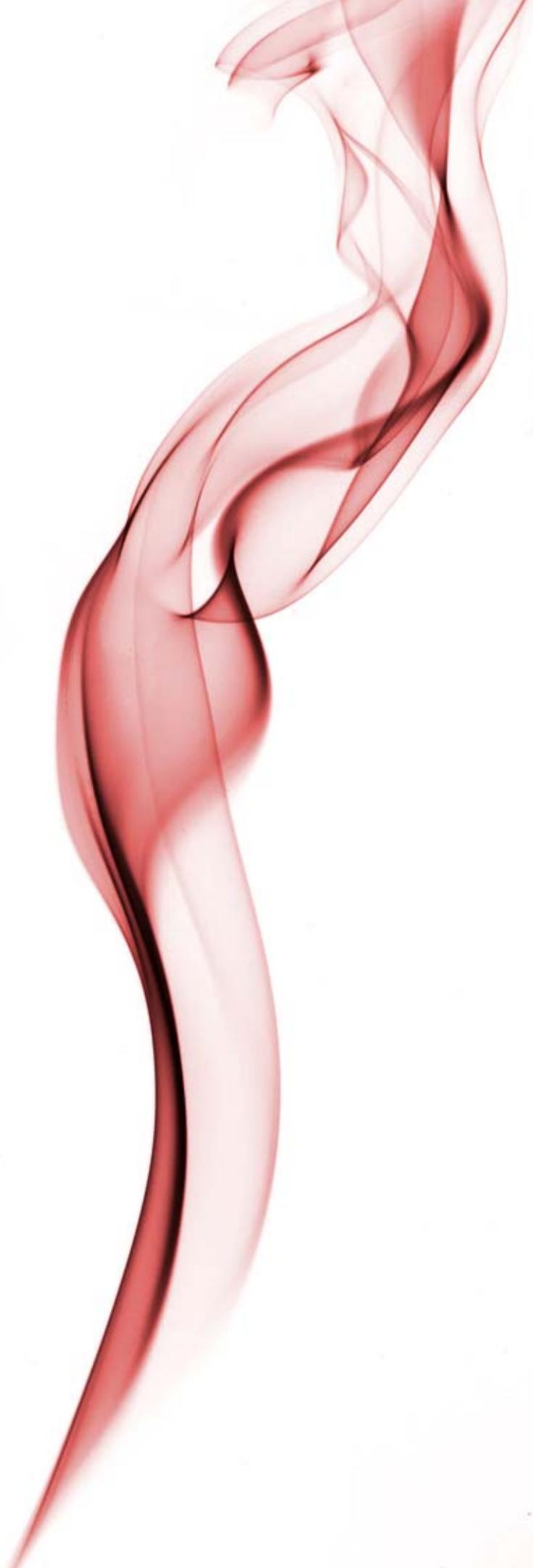
This guide will help to answer these questions and help you to successfully manage fire safety in commercial premises.

UK fire safety legislation places emphasis on preventing fires and reducing risk. Anyone who has some control over premises must take reasonable steps to reduce the likelihood of fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire. The regulations apply to virtually all non-domestic premises in England and Wales and the common (or communal) parts of blocks of flats (or Houses of Multiple Occupancy, HMO's).

If you are an employer or have control over the premises or activities that take place on the premises, then you have responsibilities under fire safety legislation. All commercial premises must have a legally-designated person responsible for fire safety. It is their duty to ensure the safety of the people in the premises.

In the case of people who are not employers but have control over premises, the extent of your responsibility will depend on the extent of your control. As this can be a complicated issue, it is sensible for organisations to identify clearly who is responsible for what.

UK fire safety legislation has slight regional variations which result in different terms used for the person on whom the legislation imposes fire safety duties. In England and Wales this person is known as the 'Responsible Person', in Scotland the 'Duty Holder' and regulations in Northern Ireland refer to the 'Appropriate Person'. In this guide we will refer to this person as the 'Responsible Person'. Other differences on requirements of the legislative regimes are discussed in this guide.



# Premises Affected

UK fire safety legislation applies to virtually all non-domestic premises and covers nearly every type of building, structure and open space, such as:

- Offices and shops
- Factories and warehouses
- Sleeping accommodation, hotels, hostels, and B&B's
- Residential care premises, including care homes and hospitals
- Community halls, places of worship and other community premises
- The shared areas of properties (HMO's) in which several households live (housing laws also apply)  
Please note, in Scotland and Northern Ireland the shared areas of HMO's are excluded
- Pubs, clubs and restaurants
- Theatres and cinemas
- Educational premises, school and sports centres
- Outdoor events, tents and marquees

It does **NOT** apply to:

- Private homes
- Anything that flies, floats or runs on wheels (unless it is static and used like a building)
- The underground parts of mines or railways, (but it does apply to sub-surface railway stations)
- Building sites (but it does apply to temporary buildings such as site offices)
- Premises used exclusively by foreign armed forces



# The Responsible Person

## SO WHO DOES FIRE SAFETY LEGISLATION APPLY TO?

The law applies to you if you are:

- Controlling a business premises
- An employer or self-employed with business premises
- Responsible for a part of a dwelling that is used for business purposes
- A charitable or voluntary organisation
- A contractor with a responsibility for any premises, or maintenance of any premises, whether or not you own the premises
- Providing accommodation for paying guests in any building where there is more than one

Responsible Person, all must work together to co-operate, co-ordinate and share information with others as far as is necessary to comply with regulations.

## WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF THE RESPONSIBLE PERSON?

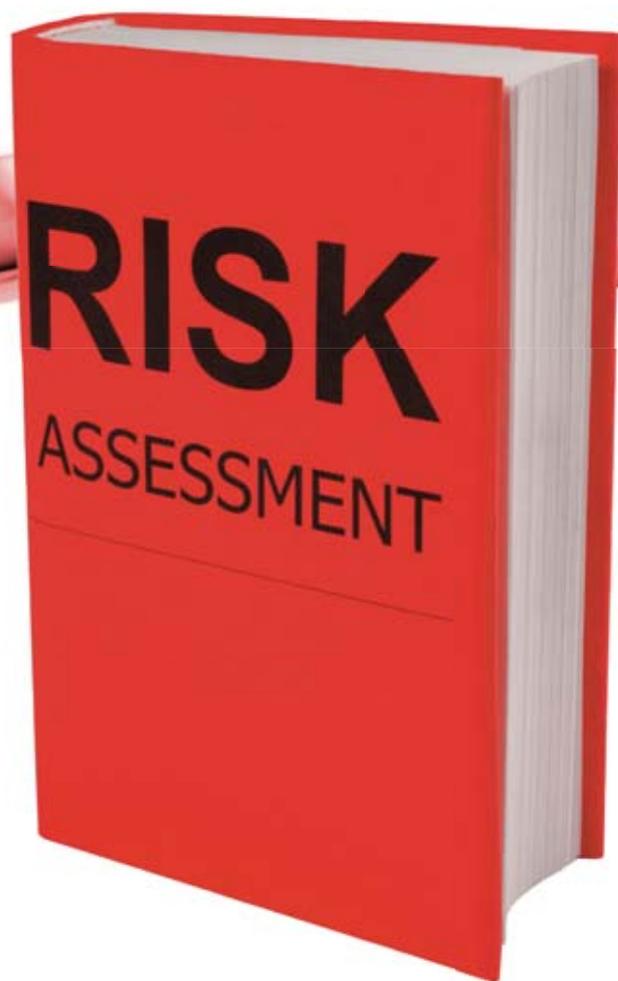
Legislation says that, if you are an employer or a person having control over premises, you are responsible for everyone who might lawfully be on your premises. This includes employees, visitors or members of the public in the immediate vicinity of your premises (i.e. at an open-air entertainment venue) who might be affected by a fire.

The Responsible Person, either on their own or with any other Responsible Person, must do their best to make sure that everyone on the premises, or nearby, can escape safely if there is a fire. You should pay particular attention to people who may have a disability or anyone who may need special help. You must address the following issues:

- Carry out a fire risk assessment and identify possible hazards and risks
- Take general fire precautions
- Principles of fire prevention are to be applied
- Fire safety arrangements, fire safety policy and procedures
- Take account of those particularly at risk, i.e. very young people; those with special needs or disabilities; and people working with hazardous chemicals
- Provide suitable arrangements to warn people of a fire in the building such as, a Fire Detection and Alarm (FD&A) system
- Eliminate or reduce risk from dangerous substances (chemicals etc.)
- Additional emergency measures in respect of dangerous substances
- Provide adequate means of escape in the case of a fire such as sufficient and suitable fire exits; fire doors and compartments; signs, notices and emergency lighting
- Take measures for fire fighting e.g. fire extinguishers
- An effective fire emergency plan to be followed in the event of a fire
- Maintenance of all fire safety systems and equipment
- Ensure capabilities and provide training to all employees and others who may need it
- Regularly review all these processes and amend if necessary



# The Fire Risk Assessment



**A**t the core of the legislation lies the Fire Risk Assessment. This is an organised appraisal of your premises to enable you to identify potential fire hazards and those who might be in danger in the event of fire and their location. You should evaluate the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether the existing fire precautions are adequate and identify any measures that need to be taken to further remove or reduce the fire risk.

Fire authorities no longer issue fire certificates and those previously in force have no legal status. However any old fire certificates you have may be a good starting point for your fire risk assessment. If your premises has been designed, built and approved in accordance with Building Regulations, then the fire precautions forming part of the structure, such as fire doors, fire alarms and emergency lighting, should be acceptable. However, it is critical that these and other elements of the fire precautions are relevant to the risks and hazards. These other elements include the use of the building; the provision of fire fighting equipment; the training of personnel and the management and maintenance of all fire precautions.

If your organisation employs five or more people and your premises are licensed, or an alterations notice is in force, you must record the significant findings of the assessment. But it is good practice to record your significant findings in any case.

It is very important that the person carrying out the fire risk assessment is competent to do it. The law requires that where employers delegate this task to employees they must take into account their capability. Legal liability may arise on the part of both the Responsible Person and the fire risk assessor if the fire risk assessment is inadequate and people are placed at risk of serious injury or death in the event of fire.

Competence does not necessarily depend on the possession of specific qualifications. In small

simple buildings and/or where the fire risk is relatively low, it is possible that an employee may study the appropriate guidance document, and with access to external help and advice, conduct a satisfactory fire risk assessment. However, for higher risk or more complex premises a higher level of knowledge and experience is required of the fire risk assessor. In this case, a risk assessor will need to have the specific applied knowledge and skills of an appropriately qualified specialist. Evidence of specialist training and experience, or membership of a professional body, can enable suitable competence to be demonstrated.

Numerous examples of inconsistencies in fire risk assessments have led to widespread calls for a definition of competence. What is needed is a standard against which to benchmark assessors, or a national register of fire risk assessors which would offer safety, security, and assurance for the user. Several professional bodies operate risk assessor registers and there are three certification schemes in place for both individuals and companies. The Fire Industry Association believes that anybody trading in the provision of fire risk assessments should be a member of a UKAS accredited company scheme and is supporting several initiatives towards this goal in conjunction with the National Competency Council.

# 1 2 3

## The Five Steps to Completing a Fire Risk Assessment

### STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE FIRE HAZARDS

This means looking for sources of heat, fuel and oxygen which together might lead to a fire. You need to identify:

- Sources of ignition such as naked flames, heaters or some commercial processes
- Sources of fuel such as built up waste, display materials, textiles or overstocked products
- Sources of oxygen such as air conditioning, medicinal or commercial oxygen supplies
- You should also consider what existing measures are in place to control the hazards

### STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE PEOPLE AT RISK

You will need to identify anyone who may be affected, such as:

- People working near to fire hazards
- People working alone or in isolated areas (i.e. roof spaces or storerooms)
- Maintenance staff, contractors, passers-by and people present outside normal working hours such as, cleaners and security guards
- Visitors and members of the public
- Individuals and groups who may be especially at risk, e.g. young or inexperienced workers, people

with mobility or sensory impairment, pregnant workers, children or parents with babies, elderly or infirm people etc.

### STEP 3: EVALUATE, REMOVE, REDUCE AND PROTECT AGAINST FIRE RISK

This involves evaluating the level of risk in your premises. You should remove or reduce any fire hazards where possible and reduce any risks you have identified.

For example:

- Replace highly flammable materials with less flammable ones
- Make sure you separate flammable materials from sources of ignition
- Have a no smoking policy

When you have reduced the risks as far as possible, you must assess any risk that is left and decide whether there are any further measures you need to take to make sure you provide a reasonable level of fire safety. The evaluation of risk will take account of the fire risk assessor's opinion of the likelihood of fire, the extent of injury that could occur and the number of people who could be affected.

#### **STEP 4: RECORD, PLAN, INSTRUCT, INFORM AND TRAIN**

It is always good practice to record the significant findings of the fire risk assessment, the steps that you have already taken and those that you plan to take in order to reduce the risk. In many cases the law requires that the significant findings of the fire risk assessment and details of those persons especially at risk are recorded.

- Record significant findings and actions taken to remove/reduce the risk from fire
- Develop and implement an appropriate emergency plan
- Inform and instruct relevant persons on the actions to be taken in the event of fire

#### **DELIVER TRAINING TO EMPLOYEES, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH SPECIFIC DUTIES (FIRE MARSHALS)**

See the section

- Fire Safety Training for more information on this

#### **STEP 5: REGULARLY REVIEW THE FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT**

- Whenever you have cause to consider it is no longer valid, e.g. after a significant incident or "near miss"
- If there has been a significant change in the workplace, e.g. changes to plant, equipment, processes, or substances used etc.
- If there has been a significant change in the number, character or needs of persons who use the building





# Protective Measures

The risk assessment should identify a specific range of protective measures that are appropriate for the particular type of premises and usage of the premises. The combination of measures will vary with the application but the following is a list of topics that need to be considered:

- Structural and passive fire protection
- Fire detection and warning systems
- Means of escape (escape routes), emergency escape lighting
- Signs and notices
- Fire fighting equipment and facilities
- Sprinkler and other water-based extinguishing systems
- Gaseous extinguishing systems
- Other fixed fire extinguishing systems
- Recording, planning, informing, instructing and training

## STRUCTURAL AND PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION

Structural and passive fire protection is the primary measure integrated within the constructional fabric of a building to provide inherent fire safety and protection. In the event of fire, these measures will provide the fundamental requirements of structural stability, fire separation through building compartmentation and safe means of escape.

Local building regulations will define the regional requirements for these measures:

- England and Wales: The Building Regulations 2010
- Northern Ireland: The Building (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- Scotland: The Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004, (as amended 2010)

Various structural and passive fire protection measures may be necessary to limit and control the spread of flame, heat and smoke from a fire. The following are some of the measures that need to be considered:

- Structural steel protection
- Fire walls and partitioning
- Fire and smoke curtains
- Fire rated ductwork and dampers
- Fire doors
- Fire resistant glazing
- Intumescent sealing systems
- Cavity fire barriers
- Fire stopping or seals for penetration of fire barriers

Note that penetrations of walls and floors by pipes and other services may provide a ready path for the spread of fire. The linings and decorative finishes of buildings must also be considered unsatisfactory as linings can promote the spread and development of fire. In buildings with large areas of drapes, consideration may should be given to the flammability. Similarly, the flammability of furniture and furnishings may need to be considered. Other hazards include excessive layers of paint on the walls and ceiling of escape routes.

Ventilation and air-conditioning systems can also provide a path for the spread of fire and smoke. Measures to reduce the risk may include a combination of fire and smoke dampers, and the interconnection of forced ventilation and air-conditioning systems to the fire alarm system.

### Further information on these products and systems may be found on the following websites:

- Association for Specialist Fire Protection: [www.asfp.org.uk](http://www.asfp.org.uk)
- Passive Fire Protection Federation: [www.pfpf.org](http://www.pfpf.org)

# Fire Detection and Alarm Systems

A fire in your premises must be detected quickly and a warning given, allowing people to escape safely.

Fire can be detected by people and manual fire detection may be all that is required. However an automatic fire detection and alarm system is normally considered necessary in the following buildings/situations:

- Buildings in which people sleep
- Covered shopping complexes and large or complex places of assembly
- Buildings with phased evacuation
- In compensation for a reduction in standards of certain other fire protection measures (e.g. extended travel distance or reduction in the fire resistance of construction protecting the escape route)
- In lieu of vision between an inner room and its associated access room
- As a means of automatically operating other fire protection measures such as closing fire doors, the release of electronically locked doors or initiation of smoke control systems

An appropriate FD&A system will warn everyone in the building at the earliest opportunity so that they can exit the building or follow other instructions that are issued, and to also alert the Fire Brigade to allow early intervention. In some instances people are asked to remain in position following an alarm to allow the fire service to control the evacuation. The FD&A system may be connected to other systems or equipment for the automatic control of fire protection measures, e.g. fire dampers or fixed extinguishing systems.

Different types of fire detector are suitable for different parts of your premises. Before installing an FD&A system, discuss your proposals with a fire consultant or your local fire authority. Fire alarm systems should be installed by companies certified to either SP203, LPS1014 or third party certification schemes, which prove their competence in that area.

FD&A systems installed in commercial premises

should be designed, installed, tested and maintained in accordance with BS 5839-1 recommendations. Systems can vary from small simple systems with one or two manual call points and sounders to systems which incorporate a large number of automatic fire detectors, manual call points and sounders connected to numerous intercommunicating control and indicating panels.

Systems may also be designed to include sophisticated techniques to avoid false alarm. Various audio and visual alarm systems are available to manage the controlled evacuation of a building in the event of a fire.

A wide range of equipment is available that will cater for the FD&A requirements of any type of premises. The types of equipment recommended may include some of the following range of products:

- All systems will include manual call points that allow people to raise a fire alarm, commonly known as “break glass” units
- Point detectors are designed to detect one or more of the four characteristics of fire; heat, smoke, combustion gas (i.e. carbon monoxide), or radiation (i.e. infra-red)
- Multi-sensor detectors combine detector technology to improve the detection characteristics and reject false alarms
- Optical beam detectors provide economical and effective protection of large, open plan spaces where the use of traditional detection technologies would prove to be difficult and/or costly to install
- Line type heat detectors are used in large industrial spaces such as tunnels or car parks with adverse environmental conditions
- Aspirating fire detection is a specialised system where air samples are taken to a sensitive central detector through a network of small pipes. These systems are often used in extreme environments, where access is difficult or heritage buildings as the installation can be very unobtrusive

- Sounders and bells give an audible fire alarm warning but these may be supplemented by voice alarm devices that give spoken instructions, or even a sophisticated voice alarm system
- Wireless systems are available which provide solutions where wired installations are not suitable
- Other devices, such as visual alarms or beacons, are used if there is a risk of audio signals not being adequately heard by all occupants, either for disability reasons or by use of ear defenders.

The operation of all this equipment is coordinated

and controlled by a control and indicating panel.

This piece of equipment allows the day to day test and running of the fire alarm system but is also at the centre of managing what happens in the event of a fire alarm.

The control and indicating panel may indicate only the zone in which a detector or call point has been activated or it may be a fully addressable panel giving details and location of the individual detector or call point that has operated.

There should always be a zone plan displayed alongside the fire alarm control and indicator panel.

## Means of Escape

**W**hen considering the likely consequences of fire, the fire risk assessor needs to take into account the effects of fire on escape routes; considering how quickly fire could be detected, how quickly it may grow; how it could affect the escape routes; and how quickly people in the building are likely to respond to an alarm.

In general, adequate means of escape are provided if people can immediately, or within a short distance of travel, turn their back on any fire and move away from it to a final exit along smoke-free escape routes.

It is important to consider how many people will use the escape route and make arrangements for disabled or elderly people. The escape route should be as short as possible and the impact of a blocked escape route must be considered. Of course, precautions should be taken to ensure this

does not happen! Emergency lighting and escape route signage should be installed and all employees must be informed and trained in how to escape the building.

There are several critical factors in the assessment of means of escape:

- Maximum distance occupants must travel to reach a place of relative or ultimate safety such as an exit to a protected stairways or a final exit
- Avoidance of long dead ends in which escape is only possible in one direction
- Number, distribution and width of story exits and final exits
- Means of protecting the escape routes from ingress or build up of smoke that might prevent occupants escaping
- Ability of occupants to use the escape routes especially arrangements for people with disabilities



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# Emergency

The primary purpose of emergency lighting (or emergency escape lighting) is to illuminate escape routes but it is also provided to illuminate signs and other safety equipment.

The size and type of your premises and the risk to the occupants will determine the complexity of the emergency lighting required. In larger more complex premises a comprehensive system of fixed automatic escape lighting is likely to be needed. This will be particularly true in premises where there are significant numbers of staff or members of the public.

If escape routes require artificial illumination, you are in a need to consider whether emergency lighting is necessary. The fire risk assessment will judge the likelihood that a fire will cause the normal lighting on any part of the escape route to fail before occupants escape from the area. This loss of normal lighting could result in injury as people try to evacuate the building.

Risk factors to consider include:

- Length and complexity of the escape routes
- Familiarity of the occupants with the building
- Measures to control the development of fire
- Measures to provide early warning of fire
- Presence of borrowed light (e.g. from street lighting)
- Hours during which people are using the building
- Presence of sleeping accommodation
- Presence of windowless areas

Emergency lighting systems should conform to the recommendations in BS 5266-1 and the requirements of BS 5266-7 and 8.

An emergency lighting system should normally cover the following:

- Each exit door
- Escape routes
- Intersections of corridors
- Outside each final exit and on external escape routes
- Emergency escape signs
- Stairways so that each flight receives adequate light
- Changes in floor level
- Windowless rooms and toilet accommodation exceeding 8m<sup>2</sup>
- Fire fighting equipment
- Fire alarm call points
- Equipment that would need to be shut down in an emergency
- Lifts
- Rooms greater than 60m<sup>2</sup>

It is not necessary to provide individual lights (luminaries) for each item above, but there should be a sufficient level of light overall to allow them to be visible and usable.

Emergency lighting can be 'maintained', i.e. on all the time, or 'non-maintained', i.e. normally off and only operates when the normal lighting fails. Emergency lights should operate for one, two or three hours, depending on the application but in practice most emergency lights are three hour. Emergency lights will also provide for some use in the premises during a power failure other than in an emergency situation.

# Lighting

Self contained emergency lights with the battery and charger built into the light fitting are commonly used. In large buildings central systems may be used where the batteries and charger are remote from the light fittings.

In some cases an emergency light doubles as an internally illuminated exit sign. However it is not

recommended to simply stick an exit sign over an emergency light fitting as this will probably reduce the light output and so may become ineffective as an emergency light.

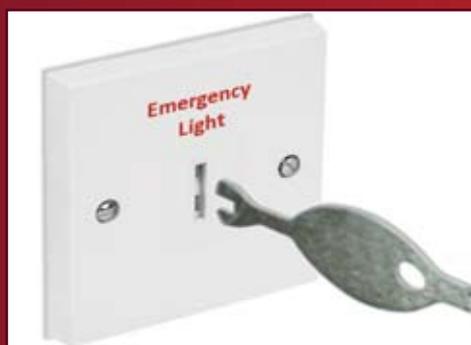
There should be a simple method of testing the emergency lights without interfering with the normal lighting from the consumer unit (see image below):



*Example of self contained emergency lights*



*Example of converted emergency light*



*Emergency Light tester*

# Signs and Notices

In order for occupants, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the building, to use the building safely, there is normally a need to provide fire exit signs to direct people towards alternative means of escape. It is therefore important to consider the adequacy of such signage in the fire risk assessment. The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 requires that these signs incorporate the appropriate pictogram. Guidance on escape routes signs is given in BS 5499-4, and EN ISO 7010 has recently been published creating a new European Standard for safety signs.

In the course of the fire risk assessment, there is also a need to consider whether other forms of fire safety signs and notices are necessary, and whether existing signs are adequate. Examples include:

- Safe condition signs, e.g. indicating the use of escape hardware
- Signs on fire doors indicating the need for doors to be shut, kept locked shut or kept clear as appropriate
- Other mandatory signs such as those indicating the need to keep a fire exit clear
- Fire equipment signs primarily where equipment is hidden from direct view, e.g. fire extinguishers
- No smoking signs
- Fire procedure notices

Note: emergency and safety signs/notices will need illumination with emergency lighting so that they can be seen in an emergency. In particular, escape route and extinguisher identification signs must be provided with emergency lighting. Photo-luminescent signs or notices provide greater security but they are not a substitute for emergency lighting and can only be used where other forms of illumination are present.

## ESCAPE SIGNS

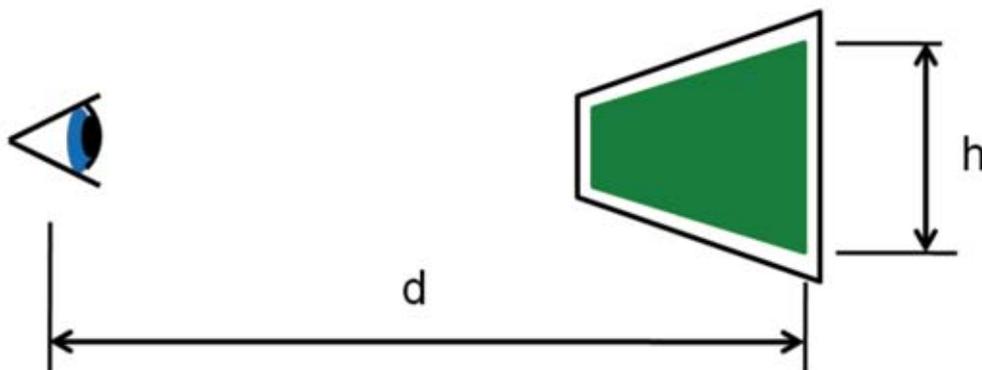
In simple premises a few signs indicating the alternative exit(s) might be all that is needed. In larger and more complex premises, a series of signs directing people along the escape routes towards the final exit might be needed.

An "Exit", "Fire exit" or "Emergency exit" sign should be positioned over every final exit from the building and, where appropriate, any gate or final exit from the premises. Where the sign over the final exit is not visible, additional signs should be provided with appropriate direction arrows leading to the final exit.

Where signs are mounted above doors they should be mounted at 2m to 2.5m above finished floor level and where they are fixed on walls they should be mounted 1.7m to 2.0m above finished floor level.

All escape route signs must be provided with normal lighting and emergency lighting.

The size of the sign depends on the distance it would be viewed from. The maximum distance ( $d$ ) from where the sign will be viewed should be no more than 100 times the height of the sign ( $h$ ) where normally lit, and 200 times the height of the sign ( $h$ ) when lit from behind (see following diagram).



To comply with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996, escape route signs should be white on a green background and consist of a pictogram, where necessary an arrow and may be provided with text. In the UK we normally use signs complying with BS 5499-1 but an alternative "Euro Style" sign has also been in use. It is important that

the two styles are not mixed in the same building. Also recent research has shown that the "Euro" style sign has not been well understood by the public. This has led to the development of a new Standard EN ISO 7010 based on the BS 5499-1 Standard and the introduction of this Standard during 2011 will lead to the "Euro" sign being phased out.



Above: BS 5499-1 Sign



Above: Euro Style Sign

Many people with poor vision retain some sight and are able to recognise changing or contrasting colour to provide them with visual clues when moving around a building. It may be sufficient to paint any columns and walls in a contrasting colour and to highlight changes in level by, for example, making the nosing to step and stair treads a contrasting colour (BS 8300 has more information on this).

For people with no sight, a well-managed 'buddy system'; continuous handrails; a sound localisation system (which helps people to move towards an alert sound); or the installation of more tactile aids may be appropriate. Exit signs should be clearly visible whenever the public, staff and contractors are present.

In multi-occupied premises, co-operation between the respective Responsible Persons should be sought to ensure that all signs in the building conform to a single pattern or scheme.

## SAFETY SIGNS AND NOTICES

Safety signs and notices are used to inform employees and other people in the premises. A number of mandatory signs may be necessary in your building:

- **'Fire action notice'** - Instructions in the event of a fire
- **'Fire door - keep shut'** - For use on self closing fire doors
- **'Fire door - keep locked shut'** - Outside fire-resisting doors to cupboards normally locked
- **'Push bar to open'** - On all doors fitted with a panic bolt
- **'Fire escape - keep clear'** - On fire doors which may become obstructed

The shape and colour of a sign is an important clue as to their meaning. Here are some examples:

**Fire Safety**  
*Location of equipment*



**Safe Condition**  
*A safe place*



**Prohibition**  
*Must not do*



**Hazard**  
*Warning*



**Mandatory**  
*Must do*



The law requires extinguishers to be indicated by signs. These extinguisher "ID" signs are often integrated with information about the type of extinguisher and its use. If not, they should be positioned close to the extinguisher where they can be easily read.



A Fire Action Notice is an effective means of providing information to employees and others who must be provided with information about emergency procedures. They should be positioned where they are readily accessible; typically near fire alarm call points, in staff rest rooms and on the back of hotel bedroom doors.

If your premises are routinely expected to accommodate people whose first language is not English you may need to consider providing instruction in more than one language. The interpretation should always convey an identical message.

# Fire Fighting Equipment and Facilities

Your risk assessment may identify the need for fire fighting equipment such as portable fire extinguishers to allow people to tackle a small fire. Extinguishers should be installed, commissioned and maintained by a SP101/ST104 certified company.

Other specialised fire fighting equipment may also be required and use of the following equipment needs to be considered:

- Portable fire extinguishers, including fire blankets and fire buckets
- Hose reels
- Sprinkler and other water-based fixed fire extinguishing systems, e.g. watermist and waterspray systems
- Gaseous fixed fire extinguishing systems; oxygen reduction systems and clean agent systems
- Other fixed fire extinguishing systems, foam systems and powder systems
- Facilities for use by fire fighters including fire mains, fire fighting lifts, and firefighters switches for high-voltage illuminated signs

The sections that follow will give more information about this equipment to help provide a basic understanding of its applications and use.

## PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Portable fire extinguishers provide the first aid of fire fighting capability at the earliest stage of a fire. They are able to control or extinguish small fires enabling people to exit quickly and before Fire and Rescue Service intervention. Be aware that attempting to extinguish a fire from a gas leak may be unsafe without first turning off the gas.

Portable fire extinguishers are valuable in the early stages of fire because of their portability, immediate

availability and easy use by one person. They cannot be expected to deal with a large fire since they are essentially first aid fire fighting appliances of a limited capacity.

The usefulness of portable fire extinguishers depends on people knowing how to use them so suitable training should be given.

Various types of fire extinguisher are available, ranging from the simple fire bucket with water or sand through to water-based extinguishers as well as foam powder and chemical extinguishers.

The selection of the appropriate extinguisher to the fire risk is essential and Standard BS 5306-8 provides guidance on the steps to be taken to determine the type and number of extinguishers required to protect the risk. For example BS 5306-8 recommends that there should be at least two fire extinguishers on every floor capable of dealing with class A fires. A typical 9L water extinguisher or 6L foam extinguisher is suitable for class A fires and has a fire rating 13A. BS 5306-8 also recommends that there should be one 13A rated fire extinguisher for every 200m<sup>2</sup> of floor space and that nobody should have to travel more than 30m to reach an extinguisher.

Portable fire extinguishers form only part of building fire protection, and it should not be assumed that their provision removes the need for other protection.

In part the application of a fire extinguisher will be defined by the fire class as defined in the table overleaf.

**For more details on the types, use and colours of various portable fire extinguishers see the following:**  
[www.fia.uk.com](http://www.fia.uk.com)





## HOSE REELS

Hose reels can be installed in all types of building, from factories and storage facilities to offices, shops and transport centres as well as schools, healthcare facilities, hotels, and prisons.

Fire Class	Description	Material	Extinguisher Type / media
<b>A</b>	Common combustibles	Wood, paper, cloth	Water, Foam, ABC powder
<b>B</b>	Flammable liquids & gases	Petrol, solvents	Foam, ABC powder
<b>C</b>	Gas	Gas cookers, gas cylinders	ABC powder
<b>D</b>	Combustible metals	Magnesium, lithium	Class D powder
<b>F</b>	Cooking media	Cooking oils and fats	Class F

## SPRINKLER AND OTHER WATER-BASED FIXED FIRE EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS

Several water-based fixed fire extinguishing systems are available and these systems can be installed in many types of building. The type and size of system and the requirement for pumps and other equipment will be determined by the system designer. Sprinkler systems should be installed by companies certified to LPS1048 third party certification schemes, which will prove their competence in this area.

Most sprinkler systems are installed for property protection but very often they play a part in an engineered fire safety solution for a building. For example, when fire exits are spaced further apart than usual, the contribution of the sprinkler system in controlling the development and spread of fire will allow more time for persons to evacuate before the premises become untenable. Where such engineered solutions are provided for life safety reasons, then a higher specification life safety sprinkler system is required. Life safety sprinkler systems have a number of additional safeguards including rapid response sprinkler heads, more reliable water supplies, bypass

arrangements that allow maintenance to take place without affecting the performance of the system, and smaller sprinkler zone sizes.

Several types of sprinkler system are available to suppress fires in ordinary combustibles:

- The most common sprinkler system is a wet pipe installation in which the system is permanently charged with water under pressure. When an automatic sprinkler head is exposed to excessive heat the heat sensitive element (glass bulb or fusible link) releases, allowing water to flow from that sprinkler onto the seat of the fire. All other sprinklers remain closed.
- Dry pipe systems are used where the system may experience low temperatures that would freeze the water. The sprinkler system is maintained with pressurised air and water is only released into the system when a heat sensitive element (glass bulb or fusible link) releases.
- Pre-action systems are similar to dry pipe systems where the system is maintained dry and water is allowed into the system following activation of a fire detector. Final release of the water also requires operation of a sprinkler head. Dry pipe and pre-



action systems will cause a slower response to fire but are used where there are concerns about the presence of water above sensitive materials like those in a museum or gallery, for example.

- In waterspray deluge systems the pipework is empty and unpressurised, and in this case the nozzles are open (i.e. without heat sensitive elements). A separate fire detection system is used to activate deluge valves, allowing water to enter the piping system. Water flows from all nozzles simultaneously. These systems are used where rapid spread of fire is a concern.
- Waterspray fire protection systems are specialised versions of a deluge system; the piping and discharge nozzle spray patterns are designed to protect a uniquely configured hazard. Waterspray systems are used for hazards where flammable liquids are handled or stored, and where rapid fire spread requires simultaneous protection of a hazard

area. Medium velocity systems provide exposure cooling whilst some high pressure systems can provide fire extinguishment of medium and heavy oil fires.

- Watermist fire protection systems utilise the large surface area of very small droplets of water to rapidly absorb heat by generating steam. In addition, the steam reduces oxygen in the vicinity of the fire. Watermist systems may use nozzles with glass bulbs (like sprinklers) for fire suppression of limited amounts of ordinary combustibles, or may have open nozzles for fire extinguishment of flammable liquid fires.

Sprinkler systems can be installed in many types of building. The size of system and the requirement for pumps and other equipment will be determined by the system designer.



## GASEOUS FIXED FIRE EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS

Generally two types of gaseous fixed fire extinguishing systems are available for normally manned enclosures:

- **Oxygen reduction systems** that use inert gases such as Argon, CO<sub>2</sub>, Nitrogen or a combination
- **Gaseous clean agent systems** that cool and breakdown the chemical reactions in fire

Oxygen reduction systems aim to prevent a fire occurring in a protected area. The oxygen level would usually be reduced to below 15Vol % content (normal air contains 20.9Vol %) but different oxygen levels are used for different applications. These systems are normally used in IT server rooms, archive storage areas, warehouse or cold stores, and laboratories. These areas are normally unmanned but entry for short periods, up to about 4 hours, will be possible.

Clean agent systems include gases such as FM200, Novec 1230, Halotran HB, NAF SHFC125 and FE13. Due to environmental issues, these gaseous clean agent systems have replaced halon 1301 as an extinguishing agent. Gaseous extinguishing systems should be installed by companies certified to LPS1204 third party certification schemes, which prove their competence in that area.

Gaseous clean agent fire extinguishing systems are used for computer rooms and EDP; indoor transformers and switchgear; telecommunications, generators; engine and turbine enclosures, and flammable liquid stores.

CO<sub>2</sub> systems are used for areas where, electrical hazards, flammable or combustible materials may be present but which are not normally occupied. Typical applications include turbines, machinery, silos

switchgear and similar electrical hazards.

Generally gaseous fire protection systems are operated by specific automatic fire detection systems in which detector provision and spacing is configured to give very early detection. Usually a "double knock" activation of two detector heads is necessary to discharge the gas. A warning is normally given in the protected area before the gas discharges to allow personnel to leave the area.

## OTHER FIXED FIRE EXTINGUISHING SYSTEMS

Foam and powder are two other fixed extinguishing systems that are available and will suit certain applications.

Foam systems are used for areas where flammable liquids and/or plastics are handled and stored. Foam forms a blanket over the surface of flammable liquids to extinguish the fire. Foam may also be used to enhance watermist and waterspray systems. Typical applications include; flammable liquid hazards; storage tanks and bunds; warehousing (foam enhanced sprinklers); process areas (foam enhanced waterspray); machinery; aircraft hangers and flammable liquid transport.

Powder fire protection systems are used in areas where ordinary combustibles, electrical hazards, flammable or combustible materials may be present but which are not normally occupied. Applications include turbines; hydraulic machinery and engines; flammable liquid handling; storage of liquid natural gas pressure relief valves; and manifolds.



# Recording, Planning, Informing, Instructing and Training

## FIRE SAFETY RECORDS

You will need to record the hazards and people you have identified as especially at risk from the risk assessment. You should also record what was done to reduce risks and need to make an emergency plan, tailored to your premises.

If your organisation employs more than five people, you must record the findings of your fire risk assessment and the actions you've taken. The record should include:

- Fire hazards you've identified
- People who may be at risk
- Protective measures you've taken or will take to remove / reduce the risk to people
- Procedures that need to be followed in case of fire, including details of any people nominated to carry out a particular function
- Information, instruction and training that people need and how it will be given

In some small low risk premises, record keeping may be no more than a folder containing a few sheets of paper with the significant findings, the action taken and a copy of the emergency plan. It's good practice to attach a simple plan of the premises to your record too. Keep a dedicated record of the following information:

- Significant findings
- Action taken
- Systems for the maintenance and regular testing of fire precautions
- Training given
- A copy of the emergency plan

## EMERGENCY PLANS

It is essential to have an emergency evacuation plan for your premises. This plan will need to deal with any fire situation and its purpose is to make sure that people on your premises know what to do if there's a fire and the premises has to be evacuated.

## INFORM AND INSTRUCT

Clear, relevant information and appropriate instructions must be given to staff and other people working on site, such as contractors, informing them what they need to do if there's a fire. The information and instructions you provide must be in a form that's easily understood and should take into account those with disabilities, learning difficulties and those for whom English is not their first language. Staff should be given training on induction and regularly thereafter, depending on the level of risk.

The information and instruction you give should be based on your emergency plan and must include:

- Your risk assessment findings
- Measures you've put in place to reduce the risk of fire
- What staff should do if there's a fire
- Clear identification of the people in the organisation who have fire safety responsibilities (such as fire marshals)

In small premises where no significant risks have been identified, information and instruction could simply involve an explanation of the fire procedures and how they're applied. This could include showing staff escape routes, how to use fire extinguishers and where they are located. In bigger premises, you should make sure that written instructions are given to those people who have designated tasks.

Co-operate and co-ordinate: where a premises is owned by someone else or there are multiple occupiers, it's important that you inform others of any significant risks that you've identified. By talking to other occupiers, you can co-ordinate your resources so that your actions and working practices don't place others at risk, and so that a co-ordinated emergency plan operates effectively.

## FIRE SAFETY TRAINING

You must provide adequate training for your staff. The type of training will depend on the premises but should:

- Reflect the findings of the fire risk assessment
- Explain your emergency procedures
- Explain the duties and responsibilities of staff
- Take place in normal working hours and be repeated periodically
- Be easily understandable by staff
- Be tested by fire drills

In small premises, showing new staff the fire exits and giving basic training on what to do if there's a fire should be adequate. However, in larger premises with a high staff turnover and shift patterns, your staff training should involve:

- The general fire precautions in the premises
- What to do on discovering a fire
- How to raise the alarm
- What to do when you hear an alarm
- Procedures for alerting members of the public and visitors
- Arrangements for calling the emergency services
- Evacuation procedures
- Location and use of fire fighting equipment
- The location of emergency exits
- The importance of keeping fire doors closed

All staff identified in your emergency plan that have a supervisory role (such as fire marshals) should be given details of your fire risk assessment and receive additional training.





# Enforcement

The person with primary responsibility for compliance with the legislation is the employer, (i.e. the corporate body that employs people to work in the premises). However, the legislation also imposes duties on other persons who have control over the premises and on those who maintain premises or facilities such as fire protection equipment; this will include landlords and managing agents.

In England and Wales this person is known as the 'Responsible Person', in Scotland the 'Duty Holder' and regulations in Northern Ireland refer to the 'Appropriate Person'. Despite different titles, the duties are essentially to ensure safety of the people on the premises.

A critical difference is that legislation in the UK and Wales extends to cover the shared or communal areas of properties in which several households live (housing laws also apply). However, the reverse is the case in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where the shared areas of accommodation are not included in legislation.

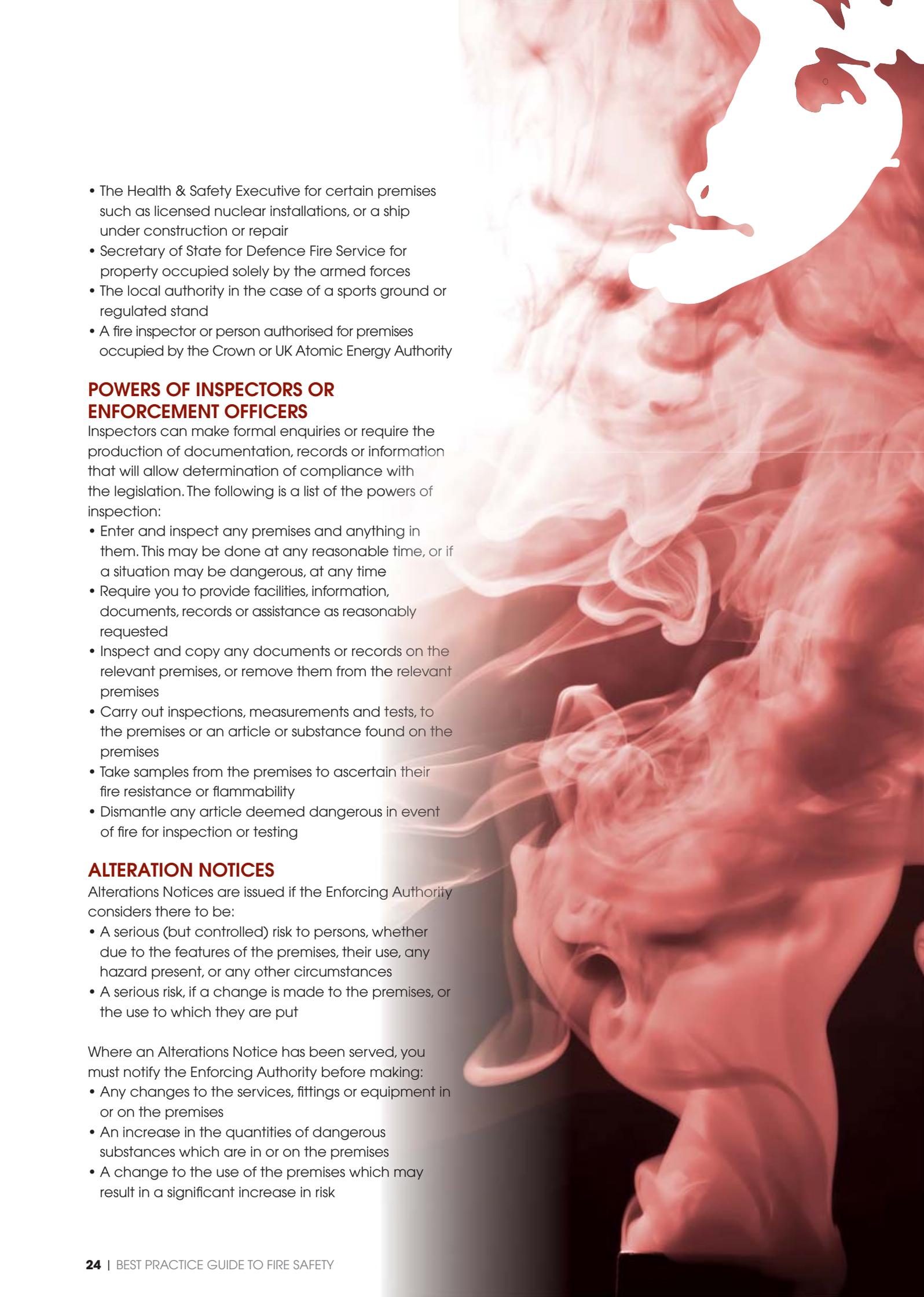
- The regional legislation that defines the obligations of the person responsible for fire safety is as follows:
- In England and Wales the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 became law on 1st October 2006.
- In Scotland the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 as amended is the applicable regulation, effective since 1st October 2006.
- In Northern Ireland the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and the Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 came into effect 15th November 2010.

Despite the use of different precise wording and the differences to how the legislation applies to households, the enactment of the legislation is very similar. The following will describe the general principles of enforcement to give an overview but details of the specific legislation that applies to your region may be found at the [legislation.gov](http://legislation.gov) website.

## **ENFORCING AUTHORITY**

The Enforcing Authority is defined as:

- Normally the Fire & Rescue Service for the area where premises are situated

- 
- The Health & Safety Executive for certain premises such as licensed nuclear installations, or a ship under construction or repair
  - Secretary of State for Defence Fire Service for property occupied solely by the armed forces
  - The local authority in the case of a sports ground or regulated stand
  - A fire inspector or person authorised for premises occupied by the Crown or UK Atomic Energy Authority

## **POWERS OF INSPECTORS OR ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

Inspectors can make formal enquiries or require the production of documentation, records or information that will allow determination of compliance with the legislation. The following is a list of the powers of inspection:

- Enter and inspect any premises and anything in them. This may be done at any reasonable time, or if a situation may be dangerous, at any time
- Require you to provide facilities, information, documents, records or assistance as reasonably requested
- Inspect and copy any documents or records on the relevant premises, or remove them from the relevant premises
- Carry out inspections, measurements and tests, to the premises or an article or substance found on the premises
- Take samples from the premises to ascertain their fire resistance or flammability
- Dismantle any article deemed dangerous in event of fire for inspection or testing

## **ALTERATION NOTICES**

Alterations Notices are issued if the Enforcing Authority considers there to be:

- A serious (but controlled) risk to persons, whether due to the features of the premises, their use, any hazard present, or any other circumstances
- A serious risk, if a change is made to the premises, or the use to which they are put

Where an Alterations Notice has been served, you must notify the Enforcing Authority before making:

- Any changes to the services, fittings or equipment in or on the premises
- An increase in the quantities of dangerous substances which are in or on the premises
- A change to the use of the premises which may result in a significant increase in risk



## ENFORCEMENT NOTICES

An Enforcement Notice is served when the Enforcing Authority believes that the Responsible Person has failed to comply with the requirements of the legislation.

An Enforcement Notice will state where there is non-compliance with the duties and why. The Notice will indicate steps that need to be taken in order to remedy the non-compliance. The Responsible Person is then required to take action to remedy the non-compliance within a specified period which will not be less than 28 days.

## PROHIBITION NOTICES

A Prohibition Notice is used to prohibit or restrict the use of premises in serious cases to prevent loss of life or serious injury. The Notice will be served on the occupier of premises and requires that those at risk are informed immediately.

When assessing the risks in deciding whether to apply a Prohibition Notice, the enforcement officer will have particular regard to anything affecting the escape from a fire.

A Prohibition Notice may take effect immediately if the enforcing authority considers the risk to be imminent. Otherwise, it will take effect from a specified date.

The Notice will specify the problems and may indicate measures that must be taken to remedy the situation.

## OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

There are various offences that can be committed and sanctions that may be applied (refer to the actual legislation for details). **It is a criminal offence not to comply with fire safety duties.**

Offences are subject to a penalty of a fine if taken through the minor court, or on conviction on indictment, to an unlimited fine and/or a prison term for serious offences.

## APPEAL

You can appeal to the court within 21 days of being served an Alteration, Enforcement or Prohibition Notice. The court may cancel, confirm or modify the Notice.

# Further Guidance

**WWW.FIA.UK.COM**

## **BUILDING REGULATIONS:**

England and Wales: The Building Regulations 2010

Northern Ireland: The Building (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010

Scotland: The Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004, (as amended 2010)

## **PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION:**

Association for Specialist Fire Protection: [www.asfp.org.uk](http://www.asfp.org.uk)

Passive Fire Protection Federation: [www.pfpf.org](http://www.pfpf.org)

## **PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS:**

[www.fia.uk.com](http://www.fia.uk.com)

For England and Wales, the [communities.gov.uk](http://communities.gov.uk) website gives further guidance, including documents for different types of premises and the following topics:

- Escape routes, emergency escape lighting
- Guidance on signs and notices
- Guidance on recording, planning, informing, instructing and training
- Quality assurance of fire protection equipment and installation
- Example fire safety maintenance checklist
- Technical information on separation, fire doors and door fastenings

For information on fire safety law for business visit: [www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/) and for documents go to: [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/151543.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/151543.pdf)

## **FIRE (SCOTLAND) ACT:**

[www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/5/part/3](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/5/part/3)

## **NORTHERN IRELAND FRS, FIRE SAFETY REGULATIONS:**

[www.nifrs.org/firesafe/](http://www.nifrs.org/firesafe/)

[www.firelawscotland.org/](http://www.firelawscotland.org/)

Practical advice for businesses can also be found at: [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

# Reference

This is a list of all the websites and publications used to create this Best Practice Guide

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

England and Wales: The Building Regulations 2010

Northern Ireland: The Building (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010

Scotland: The Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004, (as amended 2010)

## **WEBOGRAPHY**

Association for Specialist Fire Protection: [www.asfp.org.uk](http://www.asfp.org.uk)

BusinessLink.gov: [www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1073793916&r.i=1073793914&r.l1=1073858799&r.l2=1081627247&r.l3=1074253164&r.s=sc&r.t=RESOURCES&type=RESOURCES](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1073793916&r.i=1073793914&r.l1=1073858799&r.l2=1081627247&r.l3=1074253164&r.s=sc&r.t=RESOURCES&type=RESOURCES)

Communities.gov.uk: [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/151543.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/151543.pdf)

Communities.gov.uk: [www.communities.gov.uk/fire/nationalframework/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/nationalframework/)

Communities.gov.uk: [www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/)

Communities.gov.uk: [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/firesafetyrisk4](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/firesafetyrisk4)

Firesafe.org [www.firesafe.org.uk/html/fsequip/exting1.htm](http://www.firesafe.org.uk/html/fsequip/exting1.htm)

Fire Safe NI: [www.firesafeni.com/legislation.asp](http://www.firesafeni.com/legislation.asp)

Info Scotland: [www.infoscotland.com/](http://www.infoscotland.com/)

Legislation.org: [www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/5/part/3](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/5/part/3)

Manchester FRS: [www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/fire\\_safety\\_advice/business\\_fire\\_safety/legislation\\_explained.aspx](http://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/fire_safety_advice/business_fire_safety/legislation_explained.aspx)

NI Direct: [www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk/managing\\_fire\\_safety#f1](http://www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk/managing_fire_safety#f1)

Northern Ireland FRS: [www.nifrs.org/firesafe/](http://www.nifrs.org/firesafe/)

Passive Fire Protection Federation: [www.pfpf.org](http://www.pfpf.org)

Southwales-fire: [www.southwales-fire.gov.uk/English/business\\_fire\\_safety/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.southwales-fire.gov.uk/English/business_fire_safety/Pages/default.aspx)

Scotland and fire safety: [www.scotlandfiresafety.co.uk/legislation/](http://www.scotlandfiresafety.co.uk/legislation/)

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