



The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

A short guide to requirements and an explanation of the processes needed to make your premises safe from fire.

Introduction

This guidance provides a simple and practical explanation for people who are responsible for fire safety in small and medium sized businesses. It provides guidance on how to make sure that you are meeting the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Where does the Fire Safety Order apply?

The Fire Safety Order applies to virtually all premises and covers nearly every type of building, structure and open space. For example it applies to:

- Schools and Sports Centres
- Factories and Warehouses
- Community Halls, Places of Worship and other Community premises
- Tents and Marquees
- Pubs, Clubs and Restaurants
- Offices and Shops
- Premises that provide care, including Care Homes and Hospitals
- The shared areas of properties that several households live in

NB: It does not apply to private homes, including individual flats in a block or house.

What are the main rules under the Fire Safety Order?

You must:

- Carry out, or choose someone to carry out, a fire risk assessment identifying any possible dangers and risks
- Consider who may be especially at risk
- Get rid of or reduce the risk from fire as far as is reasonably possible and provide general fire precautions to deal with any possible risk remaining



- Take other measures to make sure there is protection if flammable or explosive materials are used or stored
- Create a plan to deal with any emergency, and in most cases keep a record of the findings
- Review the findings when necessary

What is a fire risk assessment?

A fire risk assessment is an organised and methodical look at your premises, the activities carried on there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the premises.

The aims of the fire risk assessment are:

- To identify the fire hazards
- To reduce the risk of those hazards causing harm to as low as reasonably practicable
- To decide what physical fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary to ensure the safety of people in your premises if a fire does start

Who is responsible for meeting the Fire Safety Order?

Anyone who has control in a premises or anyone who has a degree of control of certain areas or systems may be a “responsible person”, for example it could be:

- **The employer for those parts of the premises they have any control over**
- **The managing agent or owner for shared parts of a premise or shared fire safety equipment such as fire warning systems or sprinklers**
- **The occupier, such as self-employed people or voluntary organisations if they have any control**
- **Any other person who has some control over part of a premises**

How do I meet the Fire Safety Order?

If you are the “responsible person”, you must make sure you carry out a fire risk assessment although you can pass this task to some other competent person.



However, you will still be responsible, in law, for meeting the requirements of the Fire Safety Order.

The Order says you must manage any fire risk in your premises. The “responsible person”, either on their own or with any other “responsible person”, must as far as reasonably practical make sure that **everyone** on the premises, or nearby, can escape safely if there is a fire. This process is best carried out in steps:

1. Identify the hazards within your premises

- sources of ignition - such as naked flames, heaters
- sources of fuel - built up waste, display materials, textiles or overstocked products
- sources of oxygen - forced air circulation or medicinal or commercial oxygen supplies

2. Identify people at risk

You will need to identify those people who may be especially at risk such as:

- People working near to fire dangers
- People working alone or in isolated areas
- Children or parents with babies
- The elderly or infirm and people who are disabled

3. Evaluate - Remove - Reduce - and Protect from risk

- Evaluate the level of risk in your premises.
- You should remove or reduce any fire hazards where possible
- Reduce any risks you have identified
- When you have reduced the risk as far as possible, you must assess any risk that is left and decide whether there are any further general fire precautions measures you need to take to make sure you provide a reasonable level of fire safety.

The minimum general level of fire precautions you should consider will include the following:

- A fire detection and warning system. This can range from a shouted warning, to an electrical detection and warning system
- A way of fighting a small fire. It may be acceptable to have multi-purpose fire extinguishers. As a rule of thumb you should have one extinguisher for every 200m² of floor space with at least one on each floor

- Safe routes for people to leave the premises:
 - The ideal situation is when there is more than one exit route from all parts of the building, although this is not always possible
 - If only one route is available, you may need to make it fire resisting (protected) or install an automatic fire detection system
 - The distance people need to go to escape (travel distance) should be as short as possible. The travel distance should be measured from the farthest point in a room to the door to a protected stairway or, if there is no protected stairway, to the final exit from the building
 - **If there is only one escape route**, the travel distance should not normally be more than 18 metres. This distance should be shorter (12m or less) if there is a high fire risk or 9m in a bedroom
 - **If there is more than one escape route**, the travel distance should not normally be more than 45m (around 25m) where the risk of fire is high or 18m in a bedroom
 - **Stairways, corridors and areas near the fire exits** should be kept clear of obstructions and materials which can catch fire
 - **The escape route should lead to a final exit and a safe place**
 - **If the stairway is not protected**, the travel distance should be in-line with those suggested above for single escape routes and the final exit should be easy to see and get to from the stairway at ground floor level
 - **High-risk rooms** should not generally open directly into a fire protected stairway
 - **If your fire risk assessment shows that people using any floor would not be aware of a fire**, for example sleeping accommodation, you may need other fire protection measures, eg. an automatic fire detection and warning system
- **Suitable fire doors**, opening on to a protected fire exit route, need to be self-closing and able to withstand the passage of smoke and fire for at least 30 minutes. You should be able to use fire exit doors and any doors on an escape route without a key or specialist knowledge
- **Other things to consider:**
 - Whether you need emergency lighting
 - Suitable fire safety signs
 - **Training for your staff** and anyone else you may expect to help in a fire
 - **A management system** to make sure that you maintain your fire-safety systems

4. Record, Plan, Instruct, Inform and Train

In this step you will need to:

- Record the dangers and people you have identified as especially at risk in steps 1 & 2. You should also record what you did about it in step 3.
- You will also need to make an emergency plan tailored to your premises. It should include the action you need to take in a fire in your premises or any premises nearby
- You will need to give instructions to full-time staff, any part-time staff, and occasionally others.
- All employees should receive enough information and training about the risks in the premises and basic fire awareness. Some, such as fire marshals, will need more thorough training

5. Review

You should make sure your fire risk assessment is up to date, at least annually. You will also need to re-examine your fire risk assessment if you suspect it is no longer valid, such as after a near miss and every time there is a significant change to the level of risk in your premises. This could include:

- If you change your premises - build extensions or make alterations to the premises; you are responsible for managing the risk you create and will still have to follow the planning process and building regulations. You will need to look at how the changes will affect the risk in your premises. You should assess if your risk management measures are adequate and if you need to take any further action.
- If you store more materials which can catch fire easily
- A change in the type or number of people using your premises