



Part of

Get your business ready to employ staff: step by step
(<https://www.gov.uk/get-ready-to-employ-someone>)

Fire safety in the workplace

1. Who's responsible

You're responsible for fire safety in business or other non-domestic premises if you're:

- an employer
- the owner
- the landlord
- an occupier
- anyone else with control of the premises, for example a facilities manager, building manager, managing agent or risk assessor

You're known as the 'responsible person'. If there's more than one responsible person, you have to work together to meet your responsibilities.

The Fire Safety Order also applies if you have paying guests, for example if you run a bed and breakfast, guesthouse or let a self-catering property.

Fire safety rules are different in Scotland (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/public-safety/Fire-Rescue/FireLaw/FireLaw>) and Northern Ireland (<http://www.nifrs.org/firesafe>).

Responsibilities

As the responsible person you must:

- carry out a fire risk assessment of the premises and review it regularly
- tell staff or their representatives about the risks you've identified
- put in place, and maintain, appropriate fire safety measures
- plan for an emergency
- provide staff information, fire safety instruction and training

You can read about how to make sure your premises are safe from fire (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-your-premises-safe-from-fire>).

Non-domestic premises

Non-domestic premises are:

- all workplaces and commercial premises
- all premises the public have access to

- the common areas of multi-occupied residential buildings

Shared premises

In shared premises it's likely there'll be more than one responsible person. You'll need to co-ordinate your fire safety plans to make sure people on or around the premises are safe.

For common or shared areas, the responsible person is the landlord, freeholder or managing agent.

Alterations, extensions and new buildings

When building new premises or doing building work on existing premises, you must comply with building regulations. This includes designing fire safety into the proposed building or extension.

Read the fire safety building regulations (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-approved-document-b>).

Penalties and enforcement

You could be fined or go to prison if you don't follow fire safety regulations.

Local fire and rescue authorities inspect premises and can issue fire safety notices (<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities/enforcement-appeals-and-penalties>) telling you about changes you need to make.

2. Fire risk assessments

As the responsible person you must carry out and regularly review a fire risk assessment of the premises. This will identify what you need to do to prevent fire and keep people safe.

You must keep a written record of your fire risk assessment if your business has 5 or more people.

Carrying out the assessment

1. Identify the fire hazards.
2. Identify people at risk.
3. Evaluate, remove or reduce the risks.
4. Record your findings, prepare an emergency plan and provide training.
5. Review and update the fire risk assessment regularly.

The fire safety risk assessment chart (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-5-step-checklist>) gives more detailed information about these steps.

You'll need to consider:

- emergency routes and exits
- fire detection and warning systems
- fire fighting equipment
- the removal or safe storage of dangerous substances
- an emergency fire evacuation plan
- the needs of vulnerable people, for example the elderly, young children or those with disabilities

- providing information to employees and other people on the premises
- staff fire safety training

Help with the assessment

You can do the fire risk assessment yourself with the help of standard fire safety risk assessment guides.

If you don't have the expertise or time to do the fire risk assessment yourself you need to appoint a 'competent person' to help, for example a professional risk assessor.

Your local fire and rescue authority might be able to give you advice if you're not sure your risk assessment's been carried out properly. However, they can't carry out risk assessments for you.

Assessment guides

You can download the following guides on risk assessments in:

- offices and shops (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-offices-and-shops>)
- factories and warehouses (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-factories-and-warehouses>)
- sleeping accommodation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-sleeping-accommodation>)
- residential care premises (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-residential-care-premises>)
- educational premises (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-educational-premises>)
- small and medium places of assembly (holding 300 people or less) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-small-and-medium-places-of-assembly>)
- large places of assembly (holding more than 300 people) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-large-places-of-assembly>)
- theatres, cinemas and similar premises (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-theatres-cinemas-and-similar-premises>)
- open air events and venues (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-open-air-events-and-venues>)
- healthcare premises (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-healthcare-premises>)
- animal premises and stables (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-animal-premises-and-stables>)
- transport premises and facilities (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-transport-premises-and-facilities>)

You can also find guidance on:

- risk assessments if you work in construction (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg168.htm>)

- purpose-built blocks of flats (<http://www.local.gov.uk/fire-safety-purpose-built-flats>) and other types of housing (http://www.cieh.org/policy/fire_safety_existing_housing.html) if you're a landlord

3. Fire safety and evacuation plans

Your plan must show how you have:

- a clear passageway to all escape routes
- clearly marked escape routes that are as short and direct as possible
- enough exits and routes for all people to escape
- emergency doors that open easily
- emergency lighting where needed
- training for all employees to know and use the escape routes
- a safe meeting point for staff

People with mobility needs

You should also make special arrangements for people with mobility needs (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-means-of-escape-for-disabled-people>), for example make sure there are people to help wheelchair users get downstairs if there's a fire.

4. Fire safety equipment, drills and training

Fire detection and warning systems

You must have a fire detection and warning system. You may need different types of detectors, depending on the type of building and the work carried out in it.

Fire fighting equipment

The types of equipment you need depend on your business premises. You'll need to have any equipment properly installed, tested and maintained and train your staff to use them if necessary.

Maintenance and testing

You must carry out regular checks to make sure that:

- all fire alarm systems are working
- the emergency lighting is working
- you record any faults in systems and equipment
- all escape routes are clear and the floor is in good condition
- all fire escapes can be opened easily
- automatic fire doors close correctly
- fire exit signs are in the right place

Fire drills and training

You need to train new staff when they start work and tell all employees about any new fire risks.

You should carry out at least one fire drill per year and record the results. You must keep the results as part of your fire safety and evacuation plan.

5. Enforcement, appeals and penalties

Your local fire and rescue authority visits premises to check the fire risk assessment and fire prevention measures are appropriate. Fire safety officers should help you understand the rules and comply with them.

They can also take action if they think your fire safety measures aren't adequate. For example, they might issue an informal notice suggesting safety measures.

They could also give you a formal fire safety notice. They'll tell you how to fix the problems described in the notice.

Alterations notice

You could get an alterations notice if your premises have high safety risks or will have high safety risks if the use of the premises changes.

Enforcement notice

You could get an enforcement notice if the fire and rescue authority finds a serious risk that's not being managed. It will say what improvements are needed by when.

Prohibition notice

These take effect immediately if the fire and rescue authority thinks the fire risk is so great that access to your premises needs to be prohibited or restricted.

Appeals

You may be able to arrange an informal review from your fire and rescue authority if you disagree with the decision to issue a fire safety notice.

You can appeal to your local magistrates' court within 21 days of receiving a notice.

In certain circumstances, you and the fire and rescue authority can ask for a 'determination' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-reform-fire-safety-order-2005-guidance-note-determination-request-process>) from the Communities Secretary to resolve a dispute.

Penalties

You could be fined or go to prison if you don't follow fire safety regulations.

Minor penalties can be up to £5,000. Major penalties can have unlimited fines and up to 2 years in prison.