

Fire Safety and Fire Risk assessment for business premises



Guidance from Surrey Fire & Rescue Service

It is the aim of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, working with others, to make Surrey a safer place to live, work and do business.

Fire is but one of a spectrum of risks faced by businesses and the community today. We aim to work in partnership with communities to ensure resilience. The management of fire risk and the development of business continuity plans can add value to our communities.

www.surrey-fire.gov.uk

Contact: 01737 242444

What is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005?

It replaces most of the previous fire safety legislation. It means that any person who has some level of control in premises must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire.

Where does the order apply?

The order applies to virtually all premises and covers nearly every type of building, structure and open space. It does not apply to people's private homes, including individual flats in a block or house but it does apply to the common parts of flats and houses in multiple occupation.

Who is responsible for meeting the order?

Under the order, anyone who has control of premises or anyone who has a degree of control over certain areas or systems may be a 'responsible person'. For example, it could be:

- the employer for those parts of premises staff may go to;
- the managing agent or owner for shared parts of premises 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;
- or any other person.

What are the main rules under the 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 order. The responsible person, either on their own or with any other responsible person, must as far as is reasonably practical 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 (for example, young children).

Enforcing the order

Fire and Rescue Services will target their resources and inspections at those premises that present the highest risk. All fire authorities will continue to look into complaints about fire safety, carry out investigations after fires where poor fire-safety management is discovered and may carry out targeted inspections. If you do not meet the order, the fire authority will provide practical advice or, if the risk is serious, a formal notice. Except in the most serious cases, the fire authority will work with you to achieve a satisfactory level of fire safety.

The five step process for risk assessment.

As part of the risk assessment process you will need to consider the following general fire precautions:

A fire-detection and warning system

- You must have a suitable fire-detection and warning system. This can range from a shouted warning to an electrical detection and warning system.
- Whatever system you have, it must be able to warn people in all circumstances.

A way of fighting a small fire

- As a rule of thumb you should have one extinguisher for every 200 metre squared (m²) 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 escape route from all parts of the premises, although this is not always possible. If there is only one escape route, the travel distance should not normally be more than 18 metres.
- If only one route is available, you may need to make it fire resisting (protected) or install an automatic fire-detection system.

Suitable fire exit doors

You should be able to use fire exit doors and any doors on the escape routes without a key and without any specialist knowledge. In premises used by the public or large numbers of people, you may need push (panic) bars or push pads.

Other things to consider

Whether you need emergency lighting, suitable fire-safety signs in all but the smallest premises, training for your staff or anyone else you may reasonably expect to help in a fire and a management system to make sure that you maintain our fire safety systems.

If you are in any doubt or your premises provide care or sleeping facilities, you should read the more detailed guidance published by the Government (www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/) or get expert advice.

Advice on Fire Safety specialists and risk assessment can be found at the Governments Fire Gateway website: www.fire.gov.uk/Workplace+safety. Companies who are part of a registered scheme can be accessed through The Institution of Fire Engineers, www.ife.org.uk/frr/, The Building Research Establishment, www.bre.co.uk and Bodycote Warrington Fire, www.warringtonfire.net. Your insurer may also be able to provide a recommendation.

| Fire safety risk assessment |
|--|
| 1. Identify the fire hazards: sources of ignition, sources of fuel and sources of oxygen |
| 2. Identify the people at risk: people in and around the premises and people who are especially at risk |
| 3. Evaluate, remove or reduce, and protect from risk: evaluate the risk of a fire starting, who is at risk, remove or reduce the hazards, remove or reduce the risks to people from a fire, protect people by providing fire precautions |
| 4. Record, plan, inform, instruct and train: Record any major findings and action you may have taken, discuss and work with other responsible persons, prepare an emergency plan, inform and instruct relevant people and provide training |
| 5. Review: review your assessment regularly and make changes as required. |
| Remember to review your risk assessment regularly |

Unwanted fire signals (false alarms)

Surrey Fire and Rescue have introduced a call challenge system when dealing with automatic fire alarms (afa) at commercial premises, except where there is a significant risk to vulnerable people, to ensure that an appropriate response is sent. Between 7pm to 7am – when premises are more likely to be empty – an automatic alarm will still trigger an emergency attendance. Between 7am-7pm, when businesses are likely to have someone on-site to investigate the cause of the alarm we will expect the business to tell us:

- **if there are obvious signs of fire. If there are, we will ascertain the resource required and immediately send an emergency response to the premises.**
- **if there are not, we will ask your staff to check the premises, and call us back if there are further signs of fire.**

Staff are not expected to take unnecessary risks and appropriate fire safety training should be undertaken as part of your responsibilities under the law.

Further information can be obtained from your local area fire safety office:

| Area SFRS Office | Borough | Contact Details |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| West Area | Waverley, Guildford, Surrey Heath and Woking | 01483 517277 westareabusiness.support@surreycc.gov.uk |
| East Area | Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, Tandridge Epsom and Ewell, | 01737 224041 eastareabusiness.support@surreycc.gov.uk |
| North Area | Elmbridge, Spelthorne, Runnymede | 01737 733557 northareabusiness.support@surreycc.gov.uk |