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OHEAP
FIRE & SECURITY

Your Guide To Making a Small Paying-Guest Accommodation Safe From Fire.



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Introduction

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, is the main legislation that controls fire safety in all premises in England, including all accommodation for paying guests.

This applies to anyone that pays to stay in your premises or in a room within your premises, other than to live there permanently.

This guide outlines how to take the steps of reducing the likelihood of a fire starting and making sure that, in the event of a fire, people can evacuate to a place of safety.

The Responsible Person, refers to the owner, letting agents, or other persons who have control of the premises as defined under the Fire Safety Order.

The Fire Safety Order requires that you have a suitable fire risk assessment carried out within your premises.

It's important to identify any fire risks and take reasonable measures to ensure that people are safe from fire.

This guide is not intended to provide a detailed interpretation of fire safety legislation or the Housing Act 2004.

This guide is to provide guidance on things that should be done to comply with the legislation.

The Fire Safety Order Overview

This legislation is applied to premises where individuals pay to stay, excluding permanent residences.

Even if you rent out a room in your premises just once and it is not the tenant's principal residence, the Fire Safety Order is still applicable.

Under the Fire Safety Order, these measures apply to anyone staying in small paying guest accommodation.

This includes taking preventive measures to minimise the risk of fire.

We must ensure that in the event of a fire, people can safely evacuate to designated areas.

- Carry out a suitable fire risk assessment of your small paying guest accommodation.
- Record your findings.
- Ensure that adequate fire safety measures are provided, e.g. escape routes & fire alarms.
- Steps are taken to prevent a fire from occurring.
- Maintain fire safety measures in good condition and effective working order.
- Have fire procedures to ensure employees, guests & visitors know what to do in the event of fire.
- Employees, guests & visitors must understand the fire safety measures within the premises.
- Give suitable instructions about fire procedures and fire safety measures to any staff you employ.
- Co-operate with any other person who has duties under fire safety.
- Co-ordinate the fire safety measures for which each of you is responsible.
- Keep your fire risk assessment and fire safety measures under regular review.

Your Responsibilities

It is recommended that an annual review is usually appropriate.

If you have responsibility for the premises, you must comply to all of these points under fire safety legislation;

Fire Risk Assessments

'Fire Risk' is typically described as the probability of a fire igniting and the potential impact a fire could have on the safety of individuals within a specific location. Evaluating fire risk is an important aspect of fire safety regulations.

Fire Risk Assessments involve an inspection of the premises to identify potential fire hazards. They ensure measures are put in place to prevent fires from starting. Fire protection measures keep employees, guests, contractors, and others, who are lawfully on the premises, safe from fire.

Each person in charge must consider the people who are likely to use the premises. This includes older people, very young children and disabled people and then how they will escape in the event of a fire. Depending on any conditions, health issues etc.

Fire Hazards

A fire hazard refers to anything that could initiate a fire. This includes ignition sources or an excessive accumulation of flammable materials.

The following sections discuss fire hazards that are commonly found within paying guest accommodation and provide examples of control measures that can be used to reduce the risk of fire.

Electrical Installations & Equipment



The electrical installation in your premises should be inspected and tested at least every five years.

Overloading circuits can cause overheating, leading to a fire.

- **Faulty Wiring:** Old or damaged wiring can spark and ignite nearby materials.
- **Short Circuits:** A short circuit occurs when a hot wire comes into contact with a neutral or ground wire.

Check any plugs to make sure that they are not damaged and are not overloaded.

Also ensure that you are using properly rated fuses and cables that aren't frayed.

Smoking

Smoking is a common cause of fire in domestic premises and results in more fatalities than any other cause.

Bed & Breakfast and Self-Catering Accommodation

Your smoking policy should also address the use of vaping materials and e-cigarettes.

Smoking in public spaces, such as communal rooms and corridors, within bed and breakfast accommodation is prohibited by law.

Signs must be displayed if you do not permit smoking in bedrooms.



Arson

Entrance and exit doors should be checked and secured to prevent unauthorised access, while still allowing an easy escape in case of emergency.

Any combustible materials and recycling bins should be kept clear of the premises to reduce the risk that an external fire will spread into the openings of the premises.



Heating



Heating and hot water systems should be subject to annual maintenance by a qualified contractor to ensure they are maintained in good condition.

If your premises has log burners, the following should be considered;

- A fire/spark guard should be provided.
- The chimney should be swept annually.
- Where necessary, spark arrestors or bird guards should be provided (e.g. properties with a thatched roof).
- The size of the hearth should be adequate to prevent rugs and fabrics touching hot surface.
- Any dry wood, kindling and lighters should be stored a safe distance from heat and hot surfaces.
- Metal bins should be provided.
- Appropriate instructions should be given to all users and suitable procedures put in place.

Cooking

Cooking appliances should be maintained and kept in good condition. These requests should be visible to guests and housing owners.

This refers to gas appliances, cookers and extractors. They should all be cleaned on a regular basis and avoid build-up of materials.



Candles



Candles are a common cause of fires.

A naked flame of a candle or tea light can cause fires and fatalities.

For the use of candles and tea lights, guests should only have their own and comply with the premises guidance.

Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is fundamental to reducing the risk from fire;

- Domestic waste should be removed from the property regularly, and clear instructions should be provided to guests on the safe disposal of waste.
- Combustible materials, such as linen and towels, should be kept clear of ignition and/or heat sources. Particular attention should be paid to areas such as cupboards or storerooms that contain ignition sources or electrical equipment.
- The common escape routes, including halls and staircases, must be kept clear of combustible materials or storage.



Furniture & Furnishings

Furniture and furnishings provided in your premises should comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended).



Contractors

Contractors commonly cause fires, particularly while carrying out “hot work” involving the use of blow lamps, work on flat roofs etc.

Any contractors should be qualified in the sector of specialism in which they are employed.



Dangerous Substances

Flammables to be used and stored safely to reduce the risk of fire.

Guests must either be restricted from using these or instructed on their safe use.

Barbecues and patio heaters should not be used on external balconies in flats, they should be used how the manufacturer’s instructions state.



Fire Protection Measures

Once potential fire hazards have been identified we must analyse the effectiveness of existing control measures.

Your fire risk assessment will determine the level of general fire protection measures required in your premises to ensure the safety of people.

Factors to consider in your Small Paying Guest Accommodation include:

- The number and location of fire exits.
- Whether a fire alarm system is needed.
- The need for any fire exit signs.
- The need for emergency escape lighting.

Escape Plans

You must ensure the safe evacuation of both guests and staff in the event of a fire. Your responsibilities ensure all emergency routes and exits must lead directly to a place of safety.

Some individuals present on your premises, including older individuals, young children, and those with disabilities will need to be accounted for when making escape plans, in order to care for everyone.

Exit doors should always be easy to unlock. A simple single action turn handle or lever will often be the most appropriate for door use as well as safety.

Guests that are mobility impaired should not be given rooms where the means of escape is reliant on escape windows.

Emergency Escape Lighting

Normal light switches should be easy to find and provide clear evacuation. Existing light fittings can be replaced with low costs as emergency escape lights, which have internal batteries that power the light in the event of a mains failure.

However, in smaller premises, torches can be a better and cheaper alternative. These should be put in each bedroom, with a sign that explains their function.

Fire Escape Signs

Escape routes and fire exits are often obvious and visible. In this instance fire exit signs aren't required. However, if an exit route isn't obvious, you may be required to implement appropriate signage.

Fire Fighting Equipment

Fire fighting equipment should be provided, and staff should be trained on how to use it. You will need to make sure that the instructions on how to use any fire fighting equipment are clear, warnings that evacuation is necessary, and that staff should not tackle anything other than a very small fire themselves.

In self-catering accommodation, you may want to provide a small multi-purpose fire extinguisher and/or fire blanket in the kitchen.

Fire Detection and Alarm System

Fire detectors are found in hotels and other commercial premises. Smoke alarms should be installed in hallways, corridors etc.

They are interlinked, so that when any alarm device detects fire, all smoke and heat alarms give a loud alarm sound. Equipment that provides a warning to deaf or hard of hearing people in the event of fire should be accounted for.

Fire Procedures – Escape Plan

A simple plan may be useful for guests, including instructions on the back of the bedroom door, information in a welcome pack, and advice on how to call emergency services, with location details. Especially if the postcode might not identify the location accurately.

Guests should be told to leave the building by the nearest available exit route if a fire breaks out. The fire and rescue service should be contacted, ideally from outside the premises.

Escape plans need to be appropriate for the whole range of potential guests, taking account of age, mobility and language. This means that allowing escape through a window, for someone with limited mobility, is unlikely to be suitable. It is not acceptable to rely on the intervention of the fire and rescue service to evacuate guests or staff.

Maintenance and Testing

Fire protection measures provided in your premises should be maintained in good condition and in effective working order. Regular testing and maintenance procedures should be put in place, some of which you may be able to carry out yourself, while others may need to be carried out by a competent contractor with sufficient training, experience or knowledge.

A suitable record of testing and maintenance should be kept in the form of a log book or, alternatively, records can be held electronically. A simple maintenance and testing checklist can be used to make sure items and equipment are checked and tested in accordance with current best practice guidance.

It is important to note that smoke and heat alarms will need to be replaced periodically. The lifespan will depend on the model but, for smoke alarms, it is typically regarded as around 10 years.

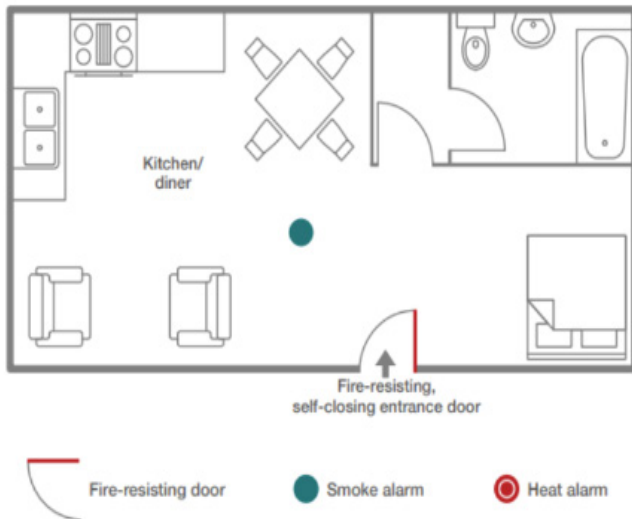
Regularly testing the batteries in your smoke alarms is important and essential for fire safety.

Crucial Checks

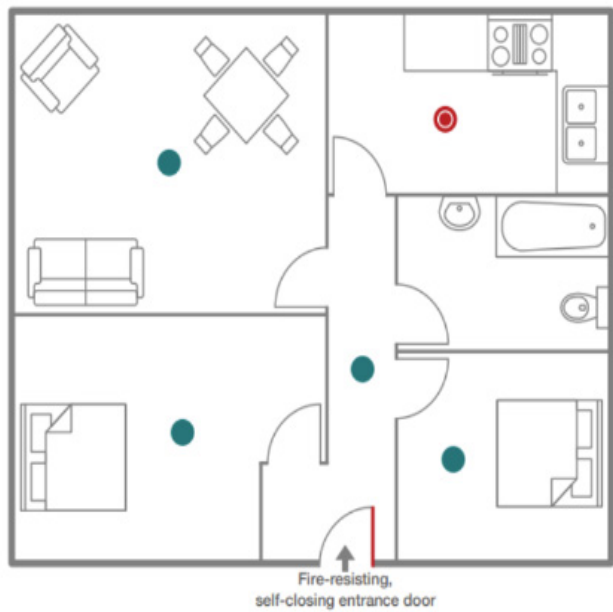
- ✔ Make sure that exit routes are not obstructed and are kept clear of storage. Weekly checks of premises in which staff or owners are present.
- ✔ If the premises are fitted with a fire detection and alarm system (rather than domestic smoke alarms), the system should be tested, using a different manual alarm call point each week, to make sure that the system is operating.
- ✔ Check that any fire-resisting doors fitted to stairways and escape routes close effectively under the action of the self-closing devices fitted. Fire doors should be inspected every 6 months, as advised in BS9999.
- ✔ Carry out a functional test of rechargeable torches and/or all emergency escape lighting units to make sure that they operate correctly.
- ✔ Domestic smoke/heat alarms should be tested to check they work and are loud enough to wake anyone who is sleeping. Manufacturers also provide recommendations on other necessary maintenance, so check their guidance.
- ✔ Emergency escape lighting should be serviced by a competent contractor.
- ✔ Fire doors should be checked to make sure they remain in good condition, are not damaged, and remain a good fit in their frames.
- ✔ Any fire extinguishers should be serviced by a competent contractor. On each change of occupancy of premises in which staff or owners are not present, e.g. self-catering premises.

Common Layouts of Small Paying-Guest-Accommodation

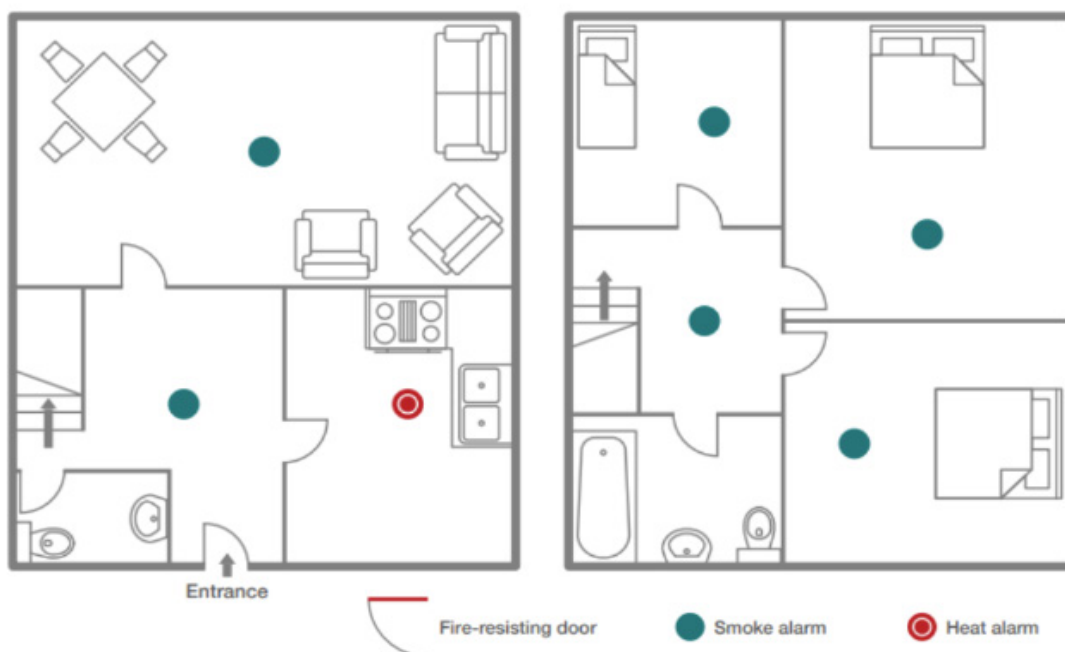
Open Plan Studio Flat



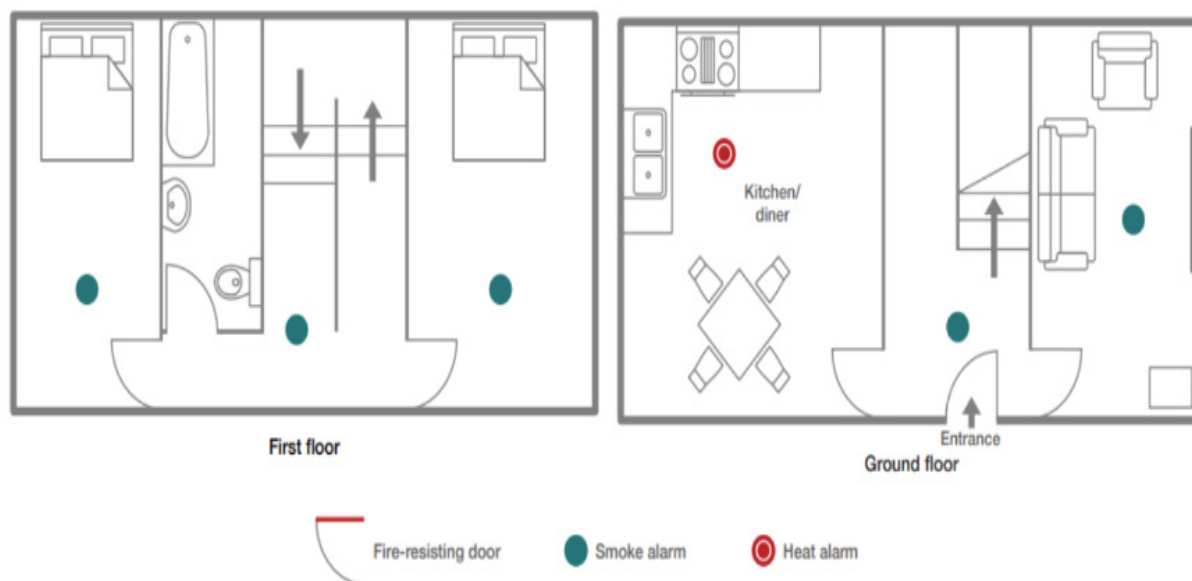
Two Bedroom Flat With Entrance Hall



Two Storey House



Two Storey Cottage



What You Need To Know About Fire Risk Assessments

Fire Hazards and Controls

- Are fixed electrical installations inspected and tested every 5 years?
- Are electrical appliances periodically inspected and tested?
- Is smoking permitted on the premises?
- Are suitable arrangements in place for those who wish to smoke?
- Are the premises adequately secured to prevent unauthorised access?
- Are combustible materials, waste and refuse bins stored safely clear of the premises or in purpose-built compounds/rooms?

- Are adequate measures taken to prevent fires from cooking?
- Is the standard of housekeeping adequate?

Fire Protection Measures

- Are all escape routes kept clear of obstructions to enable people to escape safely?
- Are all fire exits easily and immediately operable?
- Are distances of travel considered reasonable?
- Do the walls and structures protecting the stairway and escape routes provide an adequate level of fire resistance?
- Is the fire resistance of doors to stairways and escape routes considered adequate?
- Are the fire doors regularly maintained?

Management of Fire Safety

- Are procedures in the event of fire appropriate and documented?
- Is the information on fire safety and the action to take in the event of a fire given to guests?
- Are all staff members given regular instruction and training on the action to take in the event of a fire?
- Are frequent checks carried out to ensure exit routes are kept clear and fire exits remain easily operable?

The guide also identifies the certification bodies who provide schemes for certification of fire risk assessment companies, and also the bodies that provide schemes for certification or registration of individuals who are responsible to carry out fire risk assessments.

As the responsible person, you must prove to yourself that the measures you have put in place are reasonable and effective.

VisitEngland provides free guidance on all legislation relevant to tourist accommodation, including general fire safety and product safety, at www.visitengland.org/pinkbookonline

You can download the fire risk assessment template at, www.visitengland.org/fire.

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