

Fire safety advice for landlords, managing agents, private dwellings, blocks of flats and owners of houses in multiple occupation and social housing.

1. Introduction

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) are committed to making sure the community and visitors to the area it serves are safe from fire. DSFRS offers advice and guidance to business and commerce and the general public on all fire safety matters.

The advice given in this section is intended to guide and advise Landlords, managing agents and owners of the following types of properties on best practice as well as your legal responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (2005), this is commonly known as the Fire Safety Order (FSO).

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2. As a Landlord you must

Just like employers, landlords have certain legal obligations when it comes to fire safety and protection of their properties and the safety of people who reside in their premises. However, it is not as simple as ensuring there is a couple of fire extinguishers to hand – fire safety largely depends on the potential risks and the different types of buildings can cause confusion. For example, a building that is used for a single tenancy will differ to one which is shared across commercial and residential lettings.

Legislation requires that landlords carry out fire risk assessments in all areas of their properties. This process will identify any fire hazards and who is at risk and decide if anything needs to be done to remove or reduce that risk.

NB- There are responsibilities on premises that have no landlord- e.g. 4 flats with common area, lease or freehold. The flat owners are jointly 'responsible persons' and need to ensure legislative requirements are met and maintained.

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3. What Legislation applies to you?

Fire safety within the home is an extremely important issue, especially in mixed use premises and where unrelated occupiers, who live independently from one another, share common areas of the same building.

Between April 2010 and March 2011 there were 388 fire related deaths in Britain, the majority of which (306) occurred in dwelling fires.

This area of law is covered by both the [Housing Act 2004](#) inside the dwelling and for the common areas, the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order \(2005\)](#).

DSFRS would encourage all those with an interest in these types of premises to read the [Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services](#) (LACORS) guidance link to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities to carry out a fire risk assessment, and make sure their property has adequate and appropriate fire safety.

4. All landlords have legal obligations as regards fire safety

At the very least you should ensure that there is an adequate means of escape in case of fire, and landlords of shared and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) properties will have additional obligations, both under the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order \(2005\)](#) and the [Housing Act 2004](#).

The Fire Safety Order creates a legal entity known as the “responsible person”.

So if you are the owner, manager, agent or even own a flat within a block ‘you will need to check’ if YOU are the responsible person.

If a person has a contractual or tenancy obligation for the maintenance, repair of safety of a premises they can be regarded as a person in control of the premises and therefore acquire responsibility relating to the extent of their control

It has to be understood that the responsible person has an absolute duty to comply with the Fire Safety Order. The responsible person has to “get on with it” without waiting for a prompt or direction from the enforcing authority. Just as in health and safety legislation, ignorance will be no defense for non-compliance

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5. You must carry out a Fire Risk Assessment for each property you rent out.

No particular system or method of fire risk assessment is mandatory; instead the Fire Safety Order concentrates on achieving satisfactory outcomes. The objective is to identify and evaluate all fire risks to which “relevant people” are exposed and create a “suitable and sufficient” fire risk assessment.

Whilst the legislation does not define suitable and sufficient it is generally considered that a risk assessment should follow the five step approach as detailed in the following link [what does a fire risk assessment contain?](#)

Relevant people are those legally allowed on the premises, e.g. staff, visitors, residents, contractors

The overall aim of a fire risk assessment is to reduce the risk of fire, the risk of fire spread, and ensure that people can escape

A fire risk assessment should systematically identify all fire related hazards within the premises and analyse how those hazards may adversely affect the building and its occupants. It should identify the level of risk that those hazards may present and also identify suitable control measures for any significant findings. It is often best done by a fire safety professional, particularly if you have HMO properties or a large portfolio. For further guidance, there are some examples of [Fire risk assessments and blank templates](#)

For simple premises, you may wish to complete your own fire risk assessments; there are many other free templates on the internet to download

The Fire Safety Order also requires the fire risk assessment to be reviewed whenever there is a reason that it is no longer valid, or if significant changes to the matters to which it relates are proposed, e.g. altering the building or changes to occupancy/tenants.

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6. What does a Fire Risk Assessment Contain?

If you are the responsible person (Owner occupier or agent), 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. There are 5 steps to completing a fire risk assessment; you can also seek guidance from the government's booklet, [a short guide to making your premises safe from fire](#) and [Fire safety risk assessment \(sleeping accommodation\)](#)

1. **Identify fire hazards**
 - Source of ignition.
 - Sources of fuel; and
 - Sources of oxygen.
2. **Identify 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.
 - Evaluate the risk to people from a fire.
 - Remove or reduce fire hazards.
 - Remove or reduce the risk to people from fire.
 - Protect people by introducing fire precautions.
4. **Record, plan, inform, instruct and train**
 - Record any major findings and action.
 - Discuss and work with other responsible people.
 - Prepare an emergency plan.
 - Inform and instruct relevant people.
 - Provide training.
5. **Review**
 - Review your fire risk assessment regularly.
 - Make changes where necessary.

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7. Keep your residents and visitors informed

Place signs detailing actions to be taken in the event of a fire, make sure your residents and visitors know how to react and where their nearest fire assembly point is located, making sure that all residents are able to understand any instruction provided e.g. A landlord renting out their entire building to Polish migrant workers, but all instructions were in English.



Consider placing fire action signs on the inside of individual resident's front doors as well as corridors (on every level), entrance doors and common areas. You may also consider holding residents meeting to discuss fire safety issues as well as other items and concerns, you may wish to write to each individual resident to inform them formally of the fire safety measures that are in place and ask them to take note of the fire signs around your premises.



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8. Ensuring compliance

To assist with enforcement the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) discharges its responsibility to enforce the requirements of the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order \(2005\)](#) by appointing inspecting officers who undertake work on behalf of the Fire Authority. Such inspectors are given certain powers, such as:

- To enter any premises which he has reason to believe it is necessary for him to enter to enforce the Fire Safety Order at any reasonable time.
- To make enquires to ascertain whether the provisions of the Fire Safety Order have been complied with and identify the responsible person.
- To require the production of any records which are required to be kept by virtue of the Fire Safety Order so that they can inspect them, and if necessary take copies.
- Require any person with responsibility in relation to any premises to give them such facilities and assistance as to enable the inspector to exercise their powers.
- To take samples of any article or substance found in any premises to ascertain their fire resistance or flammability.
- If articles or substances are found which appear to have caused, or likely to cause danger to the safety of relevant persons, to cause it to be dismantled or subjected to any process or test.

Inspectors will carry and produce if required, evidence of their authority to exercise their powers under the Fire Safety Order.

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9. Non-compliance

There are a number of possible courses of action that can be taken by the Fire and Rescue Authority if a premises is found to be non-compliant with the Fire Safety Order, these are

- Advice letter
- Minor deficiencies letter
- Action plan

Alterations Notice

The alterations notice is a tool that can be used by the Fire and Rescue Authority to proactively control or influence the management of fire risk within such high risk premises. If the FRA is of the opinion that the premises constitutes such a risk to relevant persons, or that it may constitute such a risk if any changes are made, it can serve an alterations notice on the responsible person, giving the reasons why.

The effect of such a Notice is to require the responsible person to notify the Fire and Rescue Authority of any proposed changes to the premises before proceeding. The terms of the notice may vary, but could include requirements to send details of their fire safety assessments.

Enforcement Notice

When there are significant failures to comply with the requirements of the Fire Safety Order in premises the Fire and Rescue Authority has the power to issue an Enforcement Notice on the responsible person or person in control of the premises.

It is good practice that consultation takes place between the Fire and Rescue Authority's inspecting officers and the intended recipient so that the most practical and efficient Notice can be drafted. This is especially important as the person upon whom the Enforcement Notice is served can appeal against the Notice. Any appeal will suspend the Notice until such time as the court decides whether to uphold it, change it or cancel it.

The Enforcement Notice

- Will state the reasons why the Notice has been issued.
- Will specify which provisions of the Fire Safety Order have not been complied with.
- Will require that person to take steps to remedy the situation within a given time period.
- May include directions as to how to remedy such failures, giving choices and options between different ways to remedy the contraventions.

Recognising that there are other enforcing authorities of other legislation and regulation who may have an interest in the premises, the Fire Safety Order requires the Fire and Rescue Authority to try to consult with such authorities before issuing any Enforcement Notice.

The aim of this requirement is to try to avoid any conflict of interests and requirements between authorities, it is hoped that this consultation period will stop the responsible

person receiving conflicting, multiple or duplicated requirements from different enforcing authorities.

Prohibition Notice

Prohibition Notices are reserved for those circumstances where the risk to relevant persons is so severe that the use of the premises must be restricted or stopped immediately.

Such situations are often referred to as “dangerous conditions”. It is impossible to list all the different types or combinations of dangerous conditions that can be encountered, but they will all have one thing in common, namely that if the premises are used then people’s lives are, or will be at high risk.

Examples of situations and circumstances that could give rise to dangerous conditions include:

- Premises totally unsuitable for use to which it is being put.
- Overcrowding of premises so that means of escape is compromised or ineffective.
- Blocked, obstructed, restricted or complex escape routes.
- Missing or defective fire alarm and/or detection system.
- Excessive travel distances.
- Missing or defective structural fire resistance.
- Excessively high risk of fire breaking out or spreading.

This list is by no means conclusive. It must be emphasised that firefighters are “the eyes and ears” of the Fire and Rescue Authority and are frequently best placed to identify and report dangerous conditions

The Prohibition Notice:

- Will state the Fire and Rescue Authority’s opinion that the use of all or part of the premises should be prohibited.
- Will specify the reasons why.
- Direct that the use to which the Notice relates is prohibited or restricted as specified in the Notice.
- May include directions as to the measures that will have to be taken to remedy the situation, giving alternative options and choice as appropriate.

A Prohibition Notice takes effect immediately it is served. Appeal against the Notice can be made, but the Notice continues in effect whilst any appeal process takes place.

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10. Offences

Not every breach of the Fire Safety Order automatically constitutes an offence. Depending on the circumstances and certain legal technicalities and protocols, a failure to comply with the Fire Safety Order is a criminal offence, and therefore dealt with in the criminal courts. Many of the offences are “either way” offences, that is they can be dealt with summarily in the Magistrates Court, or can be heard (or sentenced) in the Crown Court.

The principle and probably most common offences are a failure to comply with the main requirements of the Fire Safety Order. Namely:

- Duty to take general fire precautions.
- Fire risk assessment.
- Principles of prevention.
- Fire safety arrangements.
- Elimination or reduction of risk from dangerous substances.
- Fire-fighting and fire detection.
- Emergency routes and exits.
- Procedures for serious and imminent danger.
- Maintenance.
- Safety assistance.
- Provision of information for employees.
- Provisions of information to employers and the self-employed.
- Training.
- Co-operation and co-ordination.

In all the above cases it is necessary to establish that the failure has caused relevant persons to be at risk of death or serious injury in case of fire. If this cannot be proven to the courts satisfaction then no offence has been committed.

Other “either way” offences include

- Failure to comply with an Alterations Notice.
- Failure to comply with an Enforcement Notice.
- Failure to comply with a Prohibition Notice.

A Magistrate can impose a fine up to the statutory maximum (£5000) for each offence.

A Crown Court can impose a fine, and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years for each offence.

Other offences are only dealt with summarily in the Magistrates Court and will attract a lesser sentence. These include

- Intentionally obstructing an inspector exercising their powers.
- Failure to comply with general duties of employees at work and placing one or more relevant persons at risk of death or serious injury in case of fire.

- Giving false information or making false records or entries into books, notices or documents.
- Pretend, with intent to deceive, to be an inspector.

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11. Considerations

- **You should fit smoke detectors to all properties.** These can be either battery operated or mains powered. Battery operated smoke detectors need to be tested and have their batteries replaced regularly (which residents may fail to do); those running from the mains may not work in the event of a power failure.
- **Ensure that all outside doors can be easily opened at all times from the inside.** If you fit a mortice lock, make sure you install one with a thumb turn which can open from the inside. Having a spare key by the door is less satisfactory as it can get lost.
- **Consider introducing a smoking policy in the property,** provide wall mounted ash trays to the external part of the building away from external doors and windows and encourage residents to use this as a smoking area.
- **Carry out regular electrical installation safety checks,** if your property has an alarm system and or emergency lighting installed into the common areas, these will need to be maintained and logged in a maintenance book by a competent engineer.
- **Make sure ALL passages and corridors (escape routes) are kept clear,** i.e. do not have anything which can burn or clutter the escape route for residents leaving the premises in the event of a fire.
- **All doors that lead out onto the escape route** (i.e. a front door in a block of flats) is required to be a 30 minute fire door (FD30)
- **Seek Advice from your local Fire and Rescue Service,** although the fire service are unable to complete a fire risk assessment for you, they will be able to offer guidance and best practice advice on how to meet the requirements of the Fire Safety Order or you may consider employing the services of a competent fire safety professional to carry out an assessment and provide a report, this should be carried out before taking on any residents, and preferably before starting any building work.
- **Premises security with regards to arson,** make sure all outdoor bin areas are tidy and free from combustible materials, if possible, lock bin areas and supply keys to all residents.

Remember as well as your resident's lives, it is also your investment which is at risk.

THINK F.I.R.E.

Fire Risk Assessment, make sure your risk assessment has been completed, is suitable a sufficient and is reviewed regularly.

Inspire your residents and contractors to reports any property defects or fire safety issues to you as soon as possible

Record, repair and maintain fire safety equipment and any issues within your premises.

Evaluate your properties fire safety procedures regularly.

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12. Landlords of private single properties (dwellings)

Did you know that people who live in rented or shared accommodation are seven times more likely to have a fire?

If you rent private accommodation, you as a landlord will have to meet certain safety obligations under the law. This includes making sure all gas and electrical appliances you provide are safe to use and in good working order.

The most important action a landlord can take is to ensure you provide a working smoke detector on each level of your property. Although you are not legally obliged to fit smoke detectors to your single dwelling properties, it is seen as best practice to do so and also shows your residents that you take their fire safety serious.

- Gas appliances must be checked by a registered Gas Safe engineer every year.
- Electrical appliances must carry the British Safety Standard sign.
- You must ensure furnishings you provide in your property are fire resistant and meet safety regulations.
- You must produce safety certificates to your residents, so they can see that gas and electrical appliances have been checked.
- Under the 2004 Housing Act, a landlord must ensure there are adequate escape routes in the property.

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13. Landlords who own/manage blocks of flats

Given that most fires occur in domestic dwellings, it was recognised that a block of flats as a building containing many such dwellings – had the potential for a higher risk to people should a fire break out. Accordingly, the fire safety standards that were developed to address this risk sought to afford the same level of safety found in houses to those living in blocks of flats. Additional information for fire safety in flats can be viewed by following this link [Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats](#)

Legislation requires that landlords carry out fire risk assessments in all common areas of properties. This process will identify any fire hazards and who is at risk and decide if anything can be done to minimise or remove that risk.

At the very least you should ensure that there is an adequate means of escape in case of fire, and landlords of shared and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) properties will have additional obligations, both under the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order \(2005\)](#) and the [Housing Act 2004](#).

Just like employers, landlords have certain obligations when it comes to fire safety and protection in their properties. However, it is not as simple as ensuring there is a couple of fire extinguishers to hand – fire safety largely depends on the potential risks and the different types of buildings can cause confusion. For example, a building that is used for a single tenancy will differ to one which is shared across commercial and residential lettings.

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Evaluate your properties fire safety procedures regularly.

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14. 'Stay Put' policy

In certain premises where the evacuation of the residents may pose a high risk during a fire, the buildings fire risk assessment process may allow for residents to delay evacuation from their rooms/flats in the early stages of firefighting operations. This is commonly known as a 'Stay Put' policy

Types of premises where a 'Stay Put' policy may be encountered

- Sheltered accommodation
- Blocks of flats

A 'Stay Put' policy involves the following approach

- When a fire occurs within a flat, the occupants alerts others in the flat, make their way out of the building to safety and summon the fire and rescue service.
- If a fire starts in the common parts, anyone in these areas makes their way out of the building to safety and summons the fire and rescue service.
- All other residents not directly affected by the fire would be expected to delay their evacuation and remain in their flat unless directed to leave by the fire and rescue service.
- It should not be implied that those not directly involved who wish to leave the building should be prevented from doing so. Nor does this preclude those evacuating a flat that is on fire from alerting their neighbours so that they can also escape if they feel threatened.
- Some enforcing authorities and fire risk assessors have adopted a precautionary approach whereby, unless it can be proven that the standard of construction is adequate for 'stay put', the assumption should be that it is not.

The following principles would be expected before you consider adopting a 'Stay Put' policy

- Front doors of flats need to be fire-resisting and self-closing.
- Corridors leading to stairways need to be enclosed in fire-resisting construction.
- Where there is only escape in one direction along a corridor, the extent of travel in such 'dead ends' needs to be limited.
- Open decks and balconies need to be limited in extent if escape is only possible in one direction, with fire-resisting construction to protect passing other flats to reach a stairway.
- Stairways need to be enclosed in fire-resisting construction, with fire-resisting, self-closing doors.
- Any external stairways need to be suitably separated from the building by fire-resisting construction and doors.
- Any areas, rooms or risers opening onto communal escape corridors and stairways need to be fitted with fire-resisting doors that are self-closing or kept locked shut.

- The building meets modern standards of construction
- Arrangements for maintaining stairways clear of smoke need to be provided (though means such as openable windows and vents)
- Additional protection is needed where there is only a single stairway for normal access and egress in an emergency, normally comprising lobby approach and permanent openings or automatically opening vents for clearing smoke.
- All corridors and escape routes need to be kept free of obstacles that could prevent or hinder the safe evacuation of people leaving the building.
- An approved fire alarm system is provided throughout and is properly maintained.
- There is a history of satisfactory fire safety management within the particular premises.
- There are suitable training arrangements in place for staff and residents and a record of such is kept.
- Attach a plate to the premises either near a main entrance door or the fire alarm panel informing visitors, residents and the fire service that the premises is operating a 'stay put' policy, this should be in plain view for all to see.

Keep your residents and visitors informed

Place signs detailing actions to be taken in the event of a fire, make sure your residents and visitors know how to react and where their nearest fire assembly point is located, making sure that all residents are able to understand any instruction provided e.g. A landlord renting out their entire building to Polish migrant workers, but all instructions were in English.



Consider placing fire action signs on the inside of individual resident's front doors as well as corridors (on every level), entrance doors and common areas. You may also consider holding residents meeting to discuss fire safety issues as well as other items and concerns, you may wish to write to each individual resident to inform them formally of the fire safety measures that are in place and ask them to take note of the fire signs around your premises.



Remember as well as your resident's lives, it is also your investment that is at risk.

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Fire Risk Assessment, make sure your risk assessment has been completed, is suitable a sufficient and is reviewed regularly.

Inspire your residents and contractors to reports any property defects or fire safety issues to you as soon as possible

Record, repair and maintain fire safety equipment and any issues within your premises.

Evaluate your properties fire safety procedures regularly.

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15. Houses in multiple occupancy

Definition of a HMO

A house in multiple occupancy (HMO) is defined as a dwelling that is occupied by two or more persons not living as a single household, but sharing certain facilities such as WC's, bathrooms and kitchens. When determining whether a group of occupants form a single household an enforcing authority will assess a number of areas, e.g. tenancy agreements, use of communal areas, relationship between residents, locks on bedroom doors, etc. A household may comprise of a single person, a family of six people or a couple living as partners.

Categories of HMO's

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health has grouped HMO's in six categories, dependent on their type of multi occupancy. The categories are as follows:

- Category A:** Houses occupied as single household rooms, where there is some exclusive occupation and some sharing of amenities (bathroom, toilet, kitchen, etc.). Each occupant/household lives otherwise independent of others.
- Category B:** Houses occupied on a shared basis. These are normally occupied by members of a defined group, e.g. students. The occupants each enjoy exclusive use of a bedroom but would share other facilities.
- Category C:** Houses with shared facilities occupied by people whose accommodation is ancillary to their employment or education with a recognised educational establishment.
- Category D:** Guest houses, hostels, bed and breakfast hotels and the like. These provide accommodation for people with no other permanent place of residence as distinct from hotels that provide accommodation for temporary visitors/tourists.
- Category E:** House/hostels providing accommodation and board for specific need groups registerable under the Registered Homes Act.
- Category F:** Self-contained flats with shared access (e.g. halls, landings and stairs)

Common types of HMO

- Houses divided into bedsits or flatlets
- Houses occupied by 3 or more students
- Bed and Breakfast establishments accommodating homeless people

When a property is in multiple occupation, the risk of fire breaking out is greater than in an ordinary single family home.

Some of the reasons for this are:

- Portable heating appliances may be used.
- There is often more than one kitchen present, and kitchens can be shared by a number of individual residents. Kitchen by definition high risk areas.
- Electrical circuits can become overloaded.
- There are more people in the house who are living independently of, and having no real control over, each other's behavior.

The law about HMO's and fire safety

Anyone who lets property to others is under a general duty in law to provide accommodation that is fit for the purpose and safe. However, there is a body of legislation that relates specifically to fire safety in HMO's

- The [Housing Act 2004](#) contains the powers which enable Councils to take action where a range of housing hazards, including the risk of fire, occur. The Act also lays down the licensing requirements for larger HMO's. It also enables Councils to take control of HMO's where they seriously threaten the health, safety and well-being of occupiers or people in the locality.
- The [HMO Management Regulations](#) place duties on the manager of an HMO to keep the fabric, fixtures and fittings in good order, ensure that occupiers are protected from injury and supply and maintain gas, electricity and other services.
- The [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order \(2005\)](#) which requires any person with some level of control over HMO ('Responsible Person') to:
 - Take reasonable steps to reduce risk from fire
 - Make sure anyone in the property can safely escape if a fire occurs.

The 'Responsible Person' can pass the task to some other competent person (although the 'Responsible Person' retains the duty to meet its requirements).

The first task in meeting the Orders requirements is to carry out a fire risk assessment. This identifies any possible dangers and risks in the HMO and forms the basis for action to improve fire safety.

The steps involved in carrying out a fire risk assessment are:

Identify fire hazards

- Source of ignition.
- Sources of fuel; and
- Sources of oxygen.

Identify people at risk

- People in and around the premises; and
- People who are especially at risk.

Evaluate, remove or reduce, and protect from risk

- Evaluate the risk of a fire starting.
- Evaluate the risk to people from a fire.
- Remove or reduce fire hazards.
- Remove or reduce the risk to people from fire.
- Protect people by introducing fire precautions.

Record, plan, inform, instruct and train

- Record any major findings and action.
- Discuss and work with other responsible people.
- Prepare an emergency plan.
- Inform and instruct relevant people.
- Provide training.

Review

- Review your fire risk assessment regularly.
- Make changes where necessary.

Keeping the Protected Route clear

For obvious reasons it is essential that protected escape routes in ALL HMO's are kept completely clear of items of furniture, rubbish, clothes drying facilities, bicycles, trailing leads. Nothing should be allowed to accumulate in the protected escape route that would hinder the safe evacuation of residents and visitors in the event of a fire.

Stairs, handrails and floor coverings must be maintained in a good serviceable and safe condition at all times.

Keep your residents and visitors informed

Place signs detailing actions to be taken in the event of a fire, make sure your residents and visitors know how to react and where their nearest fire assembly point is located, making sure that all residents are able to understand any instruction provided e.g. A landlord renting out their entire building to Polish migrant workers, but all instructions were in English.



Consider placing fire action signs on the inside of individual resident's bedroom doors as well as corridors (on every level), entrance doors and common areas. You may also consider holding residents meeting to discuss fire safety issues as well as other items and concerns,

you may wish to write to each individual resident to inform them formally of the fire safety measures that are in place and ask them to take note of the fire signs around your premises.



Remember as well as your resident's lives, it is also your investment that is at risk.

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Fire Risk Assessment, make sure your risk assessment has been completed, is suitable a sufficient and is reviewed regularly.

Inspire your residents and contractors to reports any property defects or fire safety issues to you as soon as possible

Record, repair and maintain fire safety equipment and any issues within your premises.

Evaluate your properties fire safety procedures regularly.

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17. Mobility Scooters

Fire and Rescue services around the country have attended numerous serious fires involving Mobility scooters often found stored and left to charge in areas such as corridors and staircases which are classed as clear areas and should be free from combustible materials and ignition sources.

This clear area often makes up the main means of escape for residents and visitors within the living accommodation. This could be a block of flats, sheltered accommodation, residential care home or other similar communal living accommodation.

The practice of storing mobility scooters in clear areas places an unacceptable risk to residents and visitors to your property and must be discouraged in all cases.

Effective management controls must be in place to ensure that means of escape are not used for storage of combustible materials or items that will block or impede the safe exit of residents and visitors in the event of a fire.

Landlord's compliance

The [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order \(2005\)](#) applies and covers general precautions and fire safety duties which are required to protect people in case of a fire in common areas and in and around buildings. The order requires that risks should be assessed and actions taken to reduce and or removed to the extent that is reasonable and practicable.

One of the requirements under the Fire Safety Order is that fire risk assessments, focussing on the safety of occupants and visitors to the building must be carried out. Such assessments will identified that electric mobility scooters pose a fire hazard when stored in communal areas or escape routes.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) advice to landlords and housing providers is that mobility scooters should not be stored, parked or charged in staircases, enclosures or communal corridors forming part of means of escape routes within buildings. Mobility scooters introduce a considerable fire loading and the scooters can be an obstruction hazard within these areas.

Remember as well as your resident's lives, it is also your investment that is at risk.

THINK F.I.R.E.

Fire Risk Assessment, make sure your risk assessment has been completed, is suitable a sufficient and is reviewed regularly.

Inspire your residents and contractors to reports any property defects or fire safety issues to you as soon as possible.

Record, repair and maintain fire safety equipment and any issues within your premises.

Evaluate your properties fire safety procedures regularly.

[Fire risk assessment](#)

[What does a fire risk assessment contain?](#)

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