

Fireco

Compliance Made Easy

The easy guide to fire safety in hotels



The legal responsibility of maintaining fire safety in a hotel may seem daunting, but we're here to make compliance easy. Here's our Fireco guide to fire safety if you own or manage a hotel.

Contents

Section 1: Who is responsible for fire safety?.....	Page 1
Section 2: How to complete a fire risk assessment	Page 3
Section 3: Fire prevention measures	Page 7
Section 4: Putting together an emergency plan.....	Page 8
Section 5: Staff training	Page 10
Section 6: Penalties for not complying with regulations	Page 12
Useful documents: Risk assessment checklist	

1

Who is responsible for fire safety?



Fire safety law applies to you if anyone pays to stay in your property (other than to live there as a permanent home).

For example if you provide:



- ✓ Guest accommodation in small premises such as B&Bs, guest houses, farmhouses, inns and restaurants with rooms
- ✓ Self-catering accommodation, such as houses, cottages, chalets, flats and holiday caravans
- ✓ Hostels or small bunkhouses
- ✓ Air B&B or equivalent
- ✓ Hotels

The person in charge of fire safety is known as the Responsible Person. This is the employer, owner of the premises or person who controls the premises.



TIP If the Responsible Person does not have the time or expertise to do a fire risk assessment, they can appoint a Competent Person in their place, such as a professional risk assessor.

What are the duties of the Responsible Person?

- ✓ Take all reasonable fire safety precautions to ensure the safety of staff and guests
- ✓ Carry out a fire risk assessment of the premises to be reviewed regularly
- ✓ Eliminate or reduce dangerous substances
- ✓ Make sure premises have appropriate firefighting and fire detection equipment
- ✓ Keep all routes to fire exits clear
- ✓ Carry out fire drills and have the right procedures in place
- ✓ Appoint enough people to manage fire safety, e.g. fire wardens, if required
- ✓ If dangerous substances are used, make sure they are safely used and stored
- ✓ Ensure all fire systems are maintained, e.g. smoke alarms, fire alarms etc, so they are all in working order
- ✓ Communicate fire safety procedures to all staff and guests
- ✓ Make sure all staff receive necessary fire safety training.



2

How to complete a fire risk assessment

All hotels, whatever the size, must complete a fire risk assessment. Regular checks of the building need to be made to ensure that hazards are removed.

Risk assessments also need to identify what happens if a fire does break out, and how people can evacuate easily and safely.

It is a good idea to keep a written record of what you find in your fire risk assessment, no matter the size of your business. If you have five or more employees the law says you **must** keep a written record of your risk assessment findings. At the end of this booklet you'll find a checklist for you to fill in.



You will need to:

- Ensure procedures are in place to reduce the likelihood of fire
- Maintain fire detection and alarm systems
- Ensure staff and guests are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures.

How to complete a fire risk assessment



It is important that:

- Fire risk assessments are kept up-to-date
- Fire precautions remain current and adequate (they should be reviewed in detail when significant alterations are made to the building).

Five-step risk assessment checklist

1

Identify fire hazards

How could a fire start and what could burn? Minimise sources of ignition, fuel and oxygen. Ensure sources of ignition and fuel are kept apart.



Potential sources of ignition:

- Candles
- Faulty or misused electrical equipment
- Fixed or portable heaters
- Cooking equipment
- Cigarettes



Examples of sources of fuel

Anything that burns is fuel for a fire.

- Laundry, curtains
- Building materials
- Cooking oils
- Waste and litter products

2

Identify anyone at risk

Everyone is at risk of fire, though some are more at risk than others.

Pay particular attention to:

- ✓ Young children
- ✓ People with disabilities
- ✓ Those unfamiliar with the layout of the building

3

Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk

Using what you've found in steps 1 and 2, remove or reduce any hazards you've found. Try to identify any accidents waiting to happen and any acts or omissions which might allow a fire to start. What are the risks of a fire starting and what are the risks to people in the building?

It is essential that the means of escape and other fire precautions are adequate to ensure that everyone can evacuate to a place of safety before the fire can trap them in the building.

Remove and reduce risks — how can you avoid accidental fires? Take action to protect everyone in the building from fire. Make sure people on upper floors are able to escape if there is a fire on the lower floor.

Ensure measures are in place to prevent the spread of fire and that fire doors are kept closed and not wedged open.



TIP You can hold your fire doors open legally and safely with certain devices which automatically release the doors to close when the fire alarm sounds.

4

Record, plan, inform, instruct and train

Keep a record of hazards and how you've reduced them.

You need a clear plan of how to prevent fire and how you'll keep people safe if there is a fire. Ensure all staff know what to do in case of fire.

5

Regularly revisit the fire risk assessment in case it needs updating

Always keep your risk assessment under review. If anything changes, ensure you make a note of it in your plan and re-train staff if necessary.

See the back of this e-book for a checklist to record your findings.

3

Fire prevention measures



The owner or manager of a hotel is legally responsible for ensuring that adequate systems are in place and that checks are carried out to reduce the risk of fire starting. Day-to-day there are some very simple measures that can be taken to make sure your hotel is fire safe, and to prevent risk to life and property.



- ✓ Make sure all members of staff are given adequate training and information
- ✓ Fire evacuation drills at least once a year
- ✓ Clear fire instructions displayed in all buildings; escape routes clearly signposted and free from obstruction
- ✓ Clearly marked fire doors, not propped or wedged open and kept clear on both sides at all times
- ✓ Fire-fighting equipment, alarms, emergency lighting and smoke detectors checked regularly by a trained person
- ✓ Adequate arrangements made for storing and disposing of flammable/combustible materials
- ✓ Regularly service electrical equipment in rooms and kitchen appliances
- ✓ Regularly check plug sockets are not overloaded
- ✓ Evacuation procedures with arrangements for people with disabilities
- ✓ Rubbish and waste is removed from the building and stored in secure bins that cannot be accessed by intruders
- ✓ Keep records of maintenance and repairs.

4

Putting together an emergency plan

Your emergency plan should be appropriate to your premises and could include:

- ✓ How people will be warned if there is a fire
- ✓ What staff or guests should do if they discover a fire
- ✓ How the evacuation of the premises should be carried out
- ✓ Where people should assemble after they have left the premises and procedures for checking whether the premises have been evacuated
- ✓ Identification of key escape routes, how people can gain access to them and escape from them to a place of total safety
- ✓ Arrangements for fighting fire
- ✓ The duties and identity of staff who have specific responsibilities if there is a fire
- ✓ Arrangements for the safe evacuation of people identified as being especially at risk, such as young children and babies, those with disabilities or contractors
- ✓ Any machines/appliances/processes/power supplies that need to be stopped or isolated if there is a fire
- ✓ Specific arrangements, if necessary, for high-risk fire areas
- ✓ Contingency plans for when life safety systems, such as evacuation lifts, fire detection and warning systems, sprinklers or smoke control systems are out of order
- ✓ How the fire and rescue service and any other necessary services will be called and who will be responsible for doing this
- ✓ Procedures for meeting the fire and rescue service on their arrival and notifying them of any special risks, e.g. the location of highly flammable materials
- ✓ What training employees need and the arrangements for ensuring that this training is given
- ✓ Phased evacuation plans (where some areas are evacuated while others are alerted but not evacuated until later).

Putting
together an
emergency plan

Types of evacuation

Simultaneous evacuation: the fire alarm sounds and everyone evacuates immediately. This is used in smaller hotels.

Vertical or horizontal phased evacuation: evacuate those at immediate risk, first on the floor where the fire is located and floors above. Temporarily delay those below until it is safe for them to evacuate. This is used in large hotels.

Fire detection equipment

It is important to have a detection system that means a fire is discovered quickly and the alarm raised early enough to allow all occupants to evacuate safely. Detectors should be of the right type and in appropriate locations. The alarm needs to be clearly heard from every point in the building and must have a back-up power supply if it is electrically powered.

The alarm must be loud enough to wake sleeping guests, make sure it is at least 75dB for alarms near the bed.

Install plenty of call points in obvious locations so staff or guests can easily raise the alarm if they spot a fire. Check smoke detectors at least once a month and test manual call points at least once a week.



Deaf and hard of hearing guests

Deaf and hard of hearing people will not hear the fire alarm so ensure you have a system in place to keep them safe.

Portable devices that are placed under the pillow are available. These vibrate and flash if the alarm sounds and are ideal for deaf and hard of hearing people.

5

Staff training



Training should include the role that members of staff are expected to carry out if fire occurs. As a minimum all staff should receive training about:



- ✓ The items listed in your emergency plan
- ✓ The importance of fire doors and other basic fire-prevention measures
- ✓ The importance of reporting to the assembly area
- ✓ Exit routes and the operation of exit devices, including physically walking these routes
- ✓ General matters such as permitted smoking areas
- ✓ Assisting people with mobility issues where necessary.

In large premises some staff will need to be appointed as fire wardens. The number required depends on the size of your hotel. As a minimum, make sure there is one fire warden per floor. Ensure all shifts are covered — you may have to appoint additional fire wardens for this purpose.

Guests are unlikely to be familiar with the layout of the hotel so will rely on wardens to show them how to evacuate. Fire wardens must have a copy of the guest list and coordinate with the fire and rescue services if anyone fails to evacuate.

All staff should be familiar with the location and basic operating procedures for firefighting equipment provided. Fire wardens should be given more comprehensive training. However the priority is always the safety of all guests and staff. If anyone is in doubt, they should concentrate on evacuation rather than firefighting.

Fire drills

These need to be done, as a minimum, once a year. However in a higher-risk industry such as hospitality, with complicated and detailed fire safety procedures, it may be necessary to carry out a fire drill more often.



- ✓ If your staff struggle to evacuate the building in the time limit you've identified as satisfactory on your risk assessment, it would be a good idea to repeat the process until they can.
- ✓ If you've had major alterations to your premises that affect escape routes, you need to carry out a fire drill
- ✓ If you have a false alarm, use the opportunity to hold a full fire drill. You should be evacuating the building anyway, so although it might not be as planned as you'd want it to be, it will count as a full drill in the eyes of the law.
- ✓ If you have high staff turnover, then it may be prudent to carry out fire drills every six months or so.

Fire safety for guests

During check-in, draw guests' attention to fire safety notices and point out the main exits. You can also hand over information sheets at this time, or make sure they're prominently displayed in bedrooms.

These should explain what to do if guests discover a fire or the fire alarm sounds, what is the nearest fire exit route, a floor plan and the nearest assembly point. They should also tell guests what to do depending on time of day, for example if the alarm sounds at night they should wake everyone in their room and not stop to get dressed.

6

Penalties for not complying with regulations

In England and Wales, a breach of fire regulations used to result in a fine of up to £5,000 in the Magistrates' courts unlike the Crown Court where the penalty was an unlimited fine and/or prison.

Now, the penalty in the Magistrates' Court is an unlimited fine and the person responsible for fire safety will be prosecuted as an individual, not as a company. This means that in future, less cases need to go to the Crown Court and fines can increase, especially if you have a significant turnover. On top of this, any enforcement action is published online for everyone to see.

Around 42% of hotels in England fail to meet satisfactory standards in their fire inspection. Here are some of the largest recorded fines that the UK hotel industry has seen.



White Swan Hotel, Arundel, 2007 – £25,000

When a fire broke out at the White Swan Hotel, 10 guests were left trapped in their bedrooms. The guests were rescued, but subsequent investigations found a list of serious fire safety breaches.

- Fire doors were wedged open
- Fire alarms weren't tested correctly
- Staff did not have adequate fire safety training
- Fire alarm panel was switched to 'silent' mode
- No suitable emergency plan in case of a fire



Tantons Hotel, Bideford, 2011 – £40,000

Tantons Hotel was ordered to pay £40,000 in fines after being condemned for breaching fire safety regulations. Fifty-five guests narrowly escaped serious injury or death after a fire broke out at 4am.

- The fire alarm failed
- A fire exit was blocked by cans of cooking oil
- A guest was sent back to their room when fire was spreading through the building

An elderly guest was fearful for her life when she was trapped between a fire exit which failed to open and another door that had no handle. The judge commented that the hotel was a “death trap”.



The Belfry Hotel, Cheshire, 2008 – £75,000

Firefighters carried out a routine visit to this luxury hotel and discovered its inadequate safety precautions were putting guests at serious risk.

They found:

- No working fire alarms
- Faulty smoke detectors
- Poor fire exits
- Lack of fire safety training for staff.

The hotel was immediately closed but re-opened after the issues were resolved and the required equipment fitted.



The Radnor Hotel, London, 2015 – £200,000

The former owner of The Radnor Hotel was fined £200,000 – the biggest ever fine from London Fire Brigade – after a routine inspection found several serious fire safety breaches.

- Missing fire doors
- No fire risk assessment
- Inadequate fire detection systems and emergency lighting
- Fire doors were tied open using string, extension cords and an extinguisher used as a wedge

The former owner was also given a four-month prison sentence



The Chumleigh Lodge Hotel, London, 2012 – £210,000

The fire brigade was called when a fire spread rapidly from a first floor bedroom to the second floor. Three people escaped. After the fire, fire inspectors found 12 offences including:

- Obstructed fire escape routes
- No smoke alarms
- Defective fire doors
- Unsuitable fire risk assessment and no staff training

The case was a landmark hearing, as it was the first time a jury convicted a defendant rather than a judge or magistrate.



Further reading

[Fire safety: guidance for the hospitality industry](#)



1. Fire hazards

Have you found anything that could start a fire?

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Have you found anything that could burn?

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2. People at risk

Who could be at risk?

Who could be especially at risk?

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3. Evaluate and act

Have you assessed the risks of fire in your workplace?

Have you assessed the risk to staff and visitors?

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Have you kept any source of fuel and heat/sparks apart?

If someone wanted to start a fire deliberately, is there anything around they could use?

Have you removed or secured any fuel an arsonist could use?

Have you protected your premises from accidental fire or arson?

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How can you make sure everyone is safe in case of fire?

Will you know there is a fire?

Do you have a plan to warn others?

Who will make sure everyone gets out?

Who will call the fire service?

Could you put out a small fire quickly and stop it spreading?

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How will everyone escape?

Have you planned escape routes?

Have you made sure people will be able to safely find their way out, even at night if necessary?

Does all your safety equipment work?

Will people know what to do and how to use equipment?

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4 Record, plan and train

Have you made a record of what you have found and action you have taken?

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Have you planned what everyone will do if there is a fire?

Have you discussed the plan with all staff?

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Have you

Informed and trained people (practised a fire drill and recorded how it went)?

Nominated staff to put in place your fire prevention measures and trained them?

Made sure everyone can fulfil their role?

Informed temporary staff?

Consulted others who share a building with you, and included them in your plan?

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5. Review

Have you?

Made any changes to the building inside or out?

Had a fire or near miss?

Changed work practices?

Begun to store chemical or dangerous substances?

Significantly changed your stock, or stock levels?

Have you planned your next fire drill?

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