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## Fire Regulations and Paying Guests

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 came into force in England and Wales on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006. This makes accommodation providers responsible for carrying out a fire safety risk assessment, regularly reviewing their assessment and improving this fire safety measures if required.

### What is a Fire Safety Risk Assessment?

It is a thorough look around your premises whilst considering the people who are likely to use them. You need to identify those at risk, especially vulnerable guests such as young children, the elderly and disabled people. You also need to consider the risk of fire breaking out and what measure you could take to prevent it.

### Who will carry out the Fire Safety Risk Assessment?

The accommodation provider must, by law, carry out a Fire Safety Risk. Whilst the Fire Service may inspect your property, and have a legal responsibility to make sure you are complying with fire safety law, they will not carry out a Fire Safety Risk Assessment for you.

### What happens if I don't carry out a Fire Safety Risk Assessment?

You are breaking the law and putting lives at risk. You may be prosecuted if you are inspected by the Fire Service, or if somebody reports you to them.

### How do I carry out a Fire Safety Risk Assessment?

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) produce a one-page "Fire Safety Risk Assessment Checklist" which can be downloaded from their website <http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety> free of charge. An 18 page "Do you have paying guests?" guide can also be downloaded or, alternatively, can be ordered free of charge at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/payingguests>

### Do I need to keep a copy of my Fire Safety Risk Assessment?

If you have 5 or more employees then yes, you must by law make a written record of your Fire Safety Risk Assessment. It is also a good idea to keep a written record of your finding if you have less than 5 employees as it shows that you have carried out a Fire Safety Risk Assessment if you are inspected by the Fire Service.

### I have a Fire Certificate, do I need to do anything?

Yes. Fire Certificates have been abolished and any which were previously issued are no longer valid. Risks change over time and the new regulations recognise that the best person to deal with changes is the person who runs the business. Under the old system, once a Fire Certificate was issued it was easy to forget about Fire Safety.



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### **Is my self-catering property covered by the law?**

Yes. Any flat, house, cottage or caravan you rent out to others on a short-term arrangement or for a holiday is covered.

### **What if I take paying guests in my own home?**

If you have any paying guests, even in your own home, you must comply with the Fire Safety laws and carry out a Fire Safety Risk Assessment. A fire in a small property is just as dangerous as one in a larger property.

### **I take less than 6 paying guests, do I need to carry out a Fire Safety Risk Assessment?**

Yes. Premises taking a low number of guests, which are similar to a family home, will likely need simpler fire safety precautions to larger premises which have more complicated layouts. However, there is no absolute definition of 'small' premises, so you must use your common sense.

### **Will it be expensive to improve my Fire Safety measures?**

It depends on your business and your premises. You may have to improve your Fire Safety measures and there may be a cost for this. In many cases, you should be able to buy Fire Safety products for use in small premises from local retailers such as DIY stores. These are likely to be less expensive than products which have been designed for larger, complicated premises.

### **Should I provide fire fighting equipment?**

In most small premises, one fire extinguisher on each floor, located near to the stairs, and a fire blanket in the kitchen should be enough. Make sure that the instructions on how to use them are clear and that there are warnings to people to only tackle small fires. Multi-purpose extinguishers, with a guarantee of 5 years, are available from most large DIY stores. You should check the gauge regularly to make sure the pressure has not dropped.

### **What should an evacuation plan and instructions cover?**

You should inform people to leave the building immediately upon being warned of a fire and notify them of the evacuation points. A simple plan or map on the back of their bedroom door, or in an information pack, may be useful. If the smoke alarms go off during the night when people are asleep, they are more likely to evacuate quickly if they have been told what to do and where to go beforehand.

### **Do I need to provide fire escape signs?**

It depends on the size and layout of your premises. In small premises, the escape route and front door are likely to be obvious so there may not be a need for emergency exit signs. Larger premises with more complicated layouts should have emergency exit directional signs showing less obvious or more complicated escape routes. Emergency exit routes should be included in any information pack which is given to guests.



## What happens once I have done the Fire Safety Risk Assessment?

You should make a note of what you have found, and the measures you have put in place. If you have 5 or more staff you are required by law to have a written plan, but it is a good idea for everyone to keep a record.

- Keep a copy somewhere safe and off-site (for example with a family member or solicitor).
- Have it available in case you are inspected by the Fire Service.
- Review it regularly – at least once a year or when you make any changes to your premises (such as adding a bedroom or changing the layout)

Remember, if you have to make any changes to your property following your Fire Safety Risk Assessment, you may need to comply with planning and building control laws.

## Will it affect my star rating?

As part of the quality or star-rating scheme, VisitBritain and the AA require you to comply with all legal responsibilities that you have as an accommodation provider. If you do not carry out a Fire Safety Risk Assessment, this will affect your rating.

## Further Information

- Information on complying with fire safety law for people who provide sleeping accommodation – available from [www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety](http://www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety)
- Fire Safety Risk Assessment Checklist – available from [www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety](http://www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety)
- Fire Safety Risk Assessment – sleeping accommodation – available from [www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety](http://www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety)
- Fire and Rescue Services – [www.fire.gov.uk](http://www.fire.gov.uk)
- Fire Safety in Wales – [www.wales.gov.uk/fire](http://www.wales.gov.uk/fire)
- Fire Safety in Scotland – [www.scotland.gov.uk/fire](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/fire)