

Fire Risk Assessment for Simple Premises

Guidance Notes

The image shows a clipboard with a silver clip at the top, holding a white paper form titled "Fire Risk Assessment for Simple Premises Record Template". The form has an orange header section with the FPA logo and contact information. Below the header, there are several grey rectangular boxes for personal details: "Building address and use", "Name of employer (responsible person/dutyholder/occupier/owner)", "Name and contact details of assessor", "Job title of assessor", and "Assessor's signature". To the right of these boxes is a large white area for notes or additional information. Below the signature box, there is a section labeled "STEP 1: IDENTIFY HAZARDS" which includes a table. The table has three columns: "Sources of ignition", "Hazard", and "Date of assessment". The "Hazard" column is further divided into two sub-columns: "Steps taken to remove the hazard" and "Steps taken to reduce hazard". The table contains several empty rows for recording findings. The entire form is placed on a brown cardboard surface.

Introduction

This guide and the accompanying fire risk assessment template and training film are intended to be used only by small businesses operating in simple premises. For the purpose of the risk assessment, we will define a 'simple premises' as having the following characteristics:

- all the occupants are awake and alert;
- the premises contains no hazardous materials;
- the premises is not below ground level; and
- the premises has no floor more than 18m above ground level.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 came into force on 1 October 2006 and applies in England and Wales. In Scotland, the relevant legislation is two-fold, being Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006. In Northern Ireland, the relevant legislation will be Part 3 of the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. This legislation is still subject to commencement orders, and is expected to come into force during 2009.

In essence, each of the above pieces of legislation has the same intention of ensuring that all 'relevant persons' will be safe should a fire occur in 'relevant premises'. A 'relevant person' is any person who is legally within 'relevant premises' or any persons who may be in the vicinity of 'relevant premises'. 'Relevant premises' are essentially any premises other than a single domestic dwelling. The legislation is applicable to virtually all premises with the exception of private homes.

The fire safety legislation in the UK places responsibility for fire safety primarily on the employer. In England and Wales, this person is defined as the 'responsible person' and in Scotland is referred to as the 'dutyholder'. The person with responsibility could be, for example:

- the employer at those parts of a building where staff and visitors may go;
- the occupier in premises such as those used by the self-employed, or voluntary organisations if they have control over a premises or part of the premises;
- the managing agent or owner for shared parts of premises or shared fire safety facilities, such as sprinklers or fire detection systems; or
- any other person who has control over a premises or part of a premises.



Every small business must:

- assess the fire risk; and
- if you employ five or more people, you must record the significant findings and details of anyone identified as being at significant risk.

Principal duties of the responsible person/dutyholder

The law imposes the following duties on the responsible person/dutyholder:

- to carry out a fire risk assessment of the premises;
- to consider those who may be at risk, the type of work undertaken, materials used or stored, the contents of the workplace and its construction;
- to remove or reduce identified hazards, so far as reasonably practicable – for example, excessive amounts of combustible materials should be removed, solvent-based adhesives should be replaced with water-based pastes, torn upholstery should be repaired;
- to provide adequate fire precautions to deal with any remaining identified risks and ensure they are maintained;
- to develop an emergency plan which describes the actions to take on discovering a fire or hearing the fire alarm;
- to provide information to employees, other employers, the self-employed and parents/guardians of young persons on the results of the fire risk assessment and emergency procedures;
- to keep appropriate records of all staff training, systems maintenance, routine checks and so on;
- to train staff in fire safety; and
- to review the risk assessment, precautions and plans when necessary.

The fire risk assessment must be suitable and sufficient for the premises and activities carried out there, and the legislation requires a competent person to be identified and appointed to ensure that fire precautions are properly managed.

In a small, simple premises it is likely that the assessment will be a relatively straightforward task and that the owner or principal occupier (responsible person/dutyholder) will be suitably competent to fulfil these requirements.

However, an element of ‘competency’ is recognising when your own knowledge and understanding is insufficient, and in such cases, further advice should be sought from either published guidance or a competent consultant, as appropriate.

The fire risk assessment process

A fire risk assessment as required by UK fire legislation is an organised and systematic review of your premises – including the building, the contents and the activities carried on there – in order to assess the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to people in and around the premises.

The objectives of the fire risk assessment are to:

- identify the fire hazards;
- reduce the risk of those hazards causing harm to as low as reasonably practicable; and
- decide what physical fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary to ensure the safety of people in the premises if a fire should start.

In small, simple premises a basic five-step approach to risk assessment is suitable:



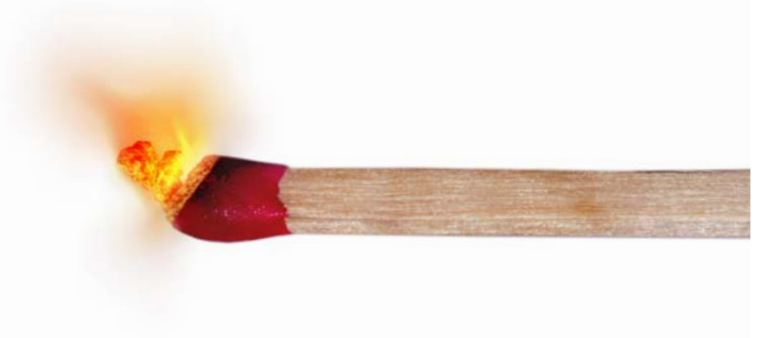
Step 1: Identify hazards and take steps to minimise the risk

Identify hazards

Note potential sources of ignition or fuel that are present in the workplace.

A – Sources of ignition

- Are any hazardous activities, including hot works, carried out on site?
- Are there any faults in your electrical circuits, fittings or appliances? Are your appliances tested in accordance with the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 (PAT-tested)?
- Are any portable heaters used?
- Is there any smoking on or near your premises?
- Are candles or other naked flames used on your premises?
- Are multi-point adaptors or trailing sockets used?
- Are any heat sources (such as desk lamps) kept close to sources of fuel?
- Is arson/wilful fire raising a potential problem?
- Are there any other ignition sources?



B – Fuel sources

- Are combustible materials stored or used on the premises (such as clothing, paper, plastics, textiles, foams or upholstered furniture)?
- Does upholstered furniture comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988?
- Is soft furnishing damaged so that the foam is exposed?
- Are there excessive amounts of loose paper or similar materials?
- Are any flammables stored on the premises (such as white spirit, turpentine, petrol, paraffin, disposable lighters, cooking oils, chemical cleaners or plastics)?
- Are compressed gas cylinders used or stored on the premises (for example, oxygen, air or acetylene)?
- Are liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders used or stored in the premises (such as butane or propane)?
- Are there excessive quantities of waste materials stored on the premises (such as shredded paper or wood shavings)?
- Are there any other possible fuel sources?
- Is the building's structure and construction conducive to fire protection? For example, are there any unstopped holes or penetrations through compartment walls, large areas of timber boarding, or uncomparted roof voids or service ducts?

Minimise the risk

Having identified the hazards in the premises, steps should be taken to try to:

- eliminate the risk by:
 - o removing the hazard;
 - o replacing a hazardous material with a non-hazardous similar product;
 - o replacing damaged furniture;
 - o installing extra electrical sockets thus eliminating the risk caused by trailing adapters; and
- reduce the risk by:
 - o storing less of a certain hazardous material;
 - o enforcing a PAT testing regime.

Note the steps that have been taken to remove or reduce the hazards.



Install extra electrical sockets to eliminate trailing adapters.

Step 2: Identify people at risk

People at risk

Note who could be harmed in the event of a fire. You must consider:

- Anybody lawfully on the premises including staff, visitors, guests, contractors, customers and those in the immediate vicinity of the premises who may be affected by fire
- People who may be unaware of the layout of the premises and anyone with any kind of disability (mobility, sight impairment, hearing impairment, pregnancy, learning difficulties)
- Any children who are present in the premises
- Anybody who may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Anybody employed out of hours
- Is the building multi-occupied? If so, you must liaise with your neighbours.
- Could employees or others cause a fire due to a lack of safety knowledge?



Step 3: Evaluate the risks of fire and assess existing fire safety measures

Evaluate the risks of fire

Where hazards remain, the severity of the hazard and likelihood of a fire occurring should be evaluated and an overall risk rating for each hazard decided.

- Could employees or others cause a fire due to a lack of safety knowledge?
- Could combustible materials be knocked or fall onto an ignition source?
- Could a fire start due to lack of maintenance of electrical equipment?
- Could a fire start due to failure to extinguish smoking materials?
- Could an arsonist/wilful fire raiser use discarded rubbish or waste in a bin or skip to start a fire? Is there a need for increased vigilance against the threat of deliberate firesetting? For example, has there been a spate of small fires in the neighbourhood or do young people congregate in the area? Consider protecting the letter slot with a sheet metal container.
- In a multi-occupied building, could a fire spread from another occupant or owner's premises?
- Could persons be unaware of the outbreak of fire?
- Could a fire spread from floor to floor?
- Could fires develop in unoccupied areas without being quickly detected?
- Could fire and smoke spread into escape routes due to poor building design or construction?
- Could fire and smoke spread due to a lack of self-closing devices on doors, or by fire doors being wedged open?

You need to record any action required to rectify any problems that become evident during your fire risk assessment.



Could combustible materials be knocked or fall onto an ignition source?

Assess existing fire safety measures

The existing fire safety measures should also be considered and an evaluation made of their adequacy. Potential areas for improvement can then be identified.

A – Provision and protection of escape routes

- Could a fire on a lower floor affect the escape route for people on upper floors, especially when only one route is provided?
- Are there any doors on exit routes that cannot be easily opened?
- Could fire/smoke spread easily through openings throughout the building?
- Could fire/smoke spread due to misuse of fire doors, or damaged or missing fire doors?
- Do any exits lead to an enclosed yard with no means of escape?
- Are fire exits routinely blocked or locked?
- Are there sufficient exits for the number of people in the premises?
- Are records kept of all checks?

B – Emergency lighting

- Do any escape routes need emergency lighting in the event of mains failure to normal lights?
- Are routine tests carried out on existing emergency lighting?
- Can all exits and escape routes be effectively used in the event of a power failure?
- If torches are used to aid evacuation in the event of power failure, are the batteries checked periodically?
- Are records kept of all checks?

C – Emergency signage

- Do fire exits have a suitable pictogram and appropriate directional arrow? (They may also be signed 'Fire Exit'.)
- Are escape routes clearly signed and identified by a running man pictogram?
- Are fire action notices – explaining the steps to take on finding a fire or on hearing the alarm – completed and present on escape routes?
- Are self-closing fire doors marked 'Fire Door Keep Shut'?
- Are records kept of all checks?

D – Fire detection and warning system

- Has a service engineer been consulted regarding the correct location of smoke and/or heat detectors?
- Is the alarm tested weekly?
- Where necessary, do you have provisions for alerting disabled people on the premises?
- Has a service engineer been asked if there are enough call-points, and do staff know how to activate one?
- Is the system maintained by a competent contractor or person?
- Are records kept of all checks?

E – Portable firefighting equipment

- Are sufficient numbers of the right types of fire extinguishers provided (at least one per floor; nobody should have to travel more than 30m to an extinguisher; at least one per 200m²)?
- Are the extinguishers positioned with the carry handles 1m off the floor, on purpose-built stands or hanging brackets?
- Are extinguishers visually checked for signs of damage on a weekly basis?
- Are the extinguishers maintained by a competent person annually?
- Are fire blankets available in kitchens, and suitably located away from cooking equipment?
- Are records kept of all the checks?



F – Staff training and drills

Management policies

- Are all staff given fire safety training on induction, and provided with a copy of the emergency action plan?
- Are staff given annual fire safety refresher training?
- Are a suitable number of appropriate staff appointed as fire wardens and adequately trained?
- Are relevant staff trained in the use of fire extinguishers?
- Are staff aware of the assembly point?
- Is the staff non-smoking policy enforced?
- Is a good housekeeping policy enforced?
- Are fire drills regularly carried out?
- Are records kept of all staff training and fire drills?
- Are staff aware of the visitors' policy, including areas where visitors are not permitted access?

Evacuation plan

- Are staff aware of their duties in ensuring everyone evacuates the building safely in the event of a fire?
- Do staff know how to assist anyone with a disability to leave the premises?

G – Provisions for disabled visitors and staff

- Do you have a plan for evacuating anybody with any disability in the event of a fire?
- Do you have emergency beacons or other appropriate equipment or devices where necessary?

H – Co-operation with neighbours

- Have you liaised with your neighbours about common fire safety measures, such as shared escape routes

I – Fire brigade access

- Can the fire brigade easily access your premises in the event of an emergency?
- Do the fire brigade have access to the plans of your building out of office hours?



Security measures to prevent arson/wilful fire raising

- Are external bins suitable? Preferably, they should be metal bins with lockable lids, sited a minimum of 6m from the building or any plant. If a plastic bin must be used, it should be 10m from the building or plant. Bins should be chained or secured in place and emptied regularly.
- Is there a strict access control policy to relevant areas of the premises?
- Is there any CCTV and external security lighting?

- Do you have a personal emergency evacuation plan for any staff members with a disability?

- Have you liaised with anyone who shares the same building as you?

- Are plans stored externally to the building?
- Who has plans during office hours?

Step 4: Record, assess and plan

Once you have completed the walk around of your premises and taken note of any hazards and risks that you find, you need to record your significant findings into the table provided in the fire risk assessment template. You should also add details of the guidance, codes and standards referred to in doing the assessment to show best practice has been followed.

The record should include significant hazards identified, details of staff who may be especially at risk and the date on which the assessment is made. The severity of the hazard and the likelihood of a fire occurring must be considered and the overall risk rating for each hazard judged.

Where remedial action is required, you should record what the problem is, whether it is of Low, Medium or High priority, what is being done to rectify it and by whom, and use the space at the end for signing off the work once complete.

It is vital that you conclude your risk assessment with an overall assessment of the threat of fire and its consequences to your specific premises. This will be deduced by what you have observed during your risk assessment, and what significant findings you noted. You should define your premises based on these findings as Low, Medium or High risk, with a description as to why you have made this decision.

It is your responsibility to prepare an emergency plan based around your findings, and communicate the contents of this plan to your staff. This can be communicated via staff

training and by displaying the plan next to fire action call-points. Particular points to consider for your evacuation plan include designating tasks for individuals if they can safely undertake them prior to evacuation, such as:

- turning off utilities;
- taking custody of certain items;
- maintaining the security of the premises;
- turning off machinery; and
- closing doors and windows.

The image shows a 'Fire Risk Assessment for Simple Premises Record Template' form. The form is white with orange and grey accents. It features the FPA (Fire Protection Association) logo at the top left. The title 'Fire Risk Assessment for Simple Premises Record Template' is prominently displayed in orange and black text. Below the title, there are several sections for recording information: 'Building address and use', 'Name of employer (responsible person/author)', 'Name and contact details of assessor', 'Assessor's signature', and 'Date of assessment'. A large table with multiple columns and rows is provided for recording hazards and risks. The form is held by a grey plastic stand that can be adjusted. A black pen is placed vertically next to the stand.

Step 5: Complete a periodic review

After the fire risk assessment has been completed and any consequential remedial works carried out, it will be necessary to conduct an assessment review from time to time.

You will also need to do an assessment review if significant changes are made to the workplace, premises, activities or personnel. For example, your original risk assessment may show that you have no disabled employees, but if one of your employees were to develop a temporary disability – say, from a broken leg – then you would need to reassess your evacuation plan.

How frequently you review your risk assessment depends on issues that affect the people and the premises, and is usually highly dependent on the possibility of introducing new hazards. Obvious changes like the introduction of new materials or equipment into the workplace, or building alterations and extensions should be automatic triggers for re-assessments. Less obvious may be gradual changes in experienced staff, or older equipment requiring higher levels of maintenance.

In storage areas or premises that may appear to be low risk, care is required to identify the hazards presented if goods are brought in from external suppliers or customers, for example.

Further information

Should you require any further assistance in ensuring your business complies with fire safety legislation, guidance and information can be obtained from the FPA website, **www.thefpa.co.uk**, where the latest publications catalogue and training prospectus are available for download.

The FPA produces a wide range of publications, guidance, DVDs and other information. For further information, to order a product, or to receive a copy of the publications catalogue, email: **sales@thefpa.co.uk**.

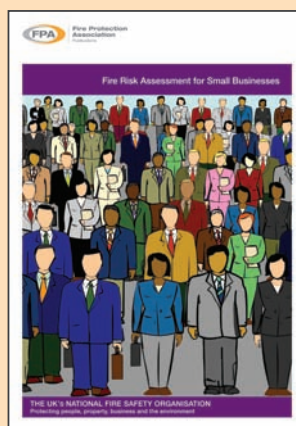
In addition, the FPA provides more than 50 training courses covering subjects from basic fire awareness, fire risk assessment and fire safety management, to the design of sprinklers and automatic fire detection systems. For details of the full range of courses, email: **training@thefpa.co.uk**.

Alternatively, if you need technical advice, the FPA can arrange for one of its network of risk assessors to visit your premises and undertake a fire risk assessment for you. Further information on the FPA's technical services is available from email: **technical@thefpa.co.uk**.

Near misses should always be reported and accidents should be thoroughly investigated to avoid repeat incidents. This could lead to a reassessment, which again should be recorded.



Further guidance on fire safety and fire risk assessment is also available from the UK Government at **www.communities.gov.uk/fire**.



Fire Risk Assessment for Small Businesses

Now available
Price: £20

This simple guide offers small businesses all the information they need to comply with fire safety legislation. It offers guidance on how to conduct a fire risk assessment, prepare an emergency plan and keep a fire safety log. The 48-page booklet contains over 20 pages of sample templates.



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