

Do you have paying guests?

If so, fire safety law applies to you, and you must take action.

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Information on complying with fire safety law for people who provide sleeping accommodation
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**THE CHIEF
FIRE OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION**
The professional voice of the
UK fire and rescue service



Sadiq Khan MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Communities and Local Government

Fire safety matters. Having a clear understanding of the risk that fire represents in your property will allow you to consider and put in place the right fire safety arrangements to protect not only the lives of your family and any guests that are staying with you, but also your property and your business enterprise.

I am therefore very pleased to announce the publication of this booklet, aimed at supporting small hospitality businesses comply with requirements of the law. It offers you helpful and straightforward information on what you are likely to need to think about and, of course do, to ensure an adequate level of fire safety is in place in your property.

Of course, risk varies. It does not lend itself to being managed in just one 'right' way. No two properties are the same and so, adequately managing the risk from fire means considering a bespoke approach, based on the individual circumstances of your premises. That is why we believe that, in most cases, it is the owners who are the best placed to consider and address the risks, using their common sense supplemented, if necessary, with some specific technical advice.

I am also particularly pleased that we have been able to develop this booklet in partnership with many of the organisations representing businesses in this sector. Their contribution has been invaluable in ensuring we tailor the information and present it in a way that addresses many of the particular concerns or problems we know some of you have faced since the Fire Safety Order was introduced.

I hope you find this booklet a useful source of information which gives you the confidence to consider and where necessary improve fire safety in your business, and to maintain an active oversight of fire safety management in the future.

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6 Fire safety risk assessment- the five key steps

8 Checklist

10 An example of a risk assessment

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If you provide accommodation for paying guests in England and Wales this booklet is designed to help you.

It gives people who own small bed and breakfasts (B&Bs), guest houses, self-catering accommodation and inns with rooms simple information on how to comply with the law. It also offers you some practical advice on what fire precautions may be necessary to ensure your premises are safe.

It will:

- tell you how to comply with the law by carrying out a fire risk assessment;
- provide you with a five-step guide to help you carry out that risk assessment;
- answer your questions;
- tell you where you can get information; and
- give you practical advice on what fire safety measures may be appropriate to provide an adequate level of fire safety in premises which are similar in size to a family home.

Does fire safety law apply to me?

Yes, 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; or
- hostels or small bunkhouses.

This is not a full list and there is no absolute definition of what is a 'small' or 'large' premises.

As a rule, if your premises are significantly larger than a family home, or if they include long, unusual or complicated routes to an exit, you will probably need more detailed advice on the range of fire safety arrangements that you need to consider.

Read and keep this booklet to help you comply with the law and protect yourself, your guests, your premises and your business from fire..

? What must I do?

The law introduced in October 2006 – known as the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 – makes you responsible for taking steps to protect the people using your premises from the risk of fire.

You must:

- carry out a fire risk assessment
- if necessary, improve your fire safety measures
- keep the risks, and your fire safety measures, under review

A fire risk assessment is something you may be able to do yourself. In many cases, particularly in smaller premises which are also in use as a family home, it may be common sense. But, you do need to set aside the time to assess thoroughly the risks on your premises and then to put in place measures to minimise them.

? Where can I get help?

Start by reading and keeping this booklet.

It explains the risk assessment process and gives you some advice on what arrangements **may** be suitable to protect your premises.

In many cases, you are the best person to think about what risks there are likely to be on your premises, and how you can control them. This booklet should help you make a start, although you can get more detailed and technical advice in the fire safety risk assessment guide for sleeping accommodation. You can download the sleeping accommodation guide for free from www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety or order a copy (£12) by phoning 0300 123 1124.

You can choose someone to help you carry out the risk assessment. This may be someone who you feel may have the necessary knowledge or expertise to carry out this task, including someone you know who has already carried out a fire risk assessment or a fire safety specialist whom you pay. If you do choose to get advice or help from others, you are still legally responsible for the risk assessment.

If, after reading the guidance and perhaps getting help from someone else, you still feel you need more information about appropriate measures to take, you can contact your local Fire Service.

The Fire Service cannot carry out the risk assessment for you. But, they may be able to give you information and advice on appropriate measures to protect your premises from fire.

? What is a fire safety risk assessment?

It is a thorough look at your premises and the people who are likely to use them, including the elderly, very young children and disabled people. It considers the risk of fire breaking out and what measures you need to put in place to prevent it and keep people safe.

We have worked out five key steps that are important for carrying out a risk assessment. We have explained these on pages 6 and 7 and included a checklist on pages 8 and 9. This will help you go through what you need to do.

➔ **The law will apply to you when you let out a room in your own home as guest accommodation, even if you only do it occasionally.**

Keep a record

It is a good idea for you to keep a written record of what you find in your risk assessment. If you have five or more employees (including any who work part-time), the law says you **must** make a written record of the significant findings. Significant findings are those which set out the measures you have - or plan - to put in place to manage the risk, along with details of anyone likely to be especially vulnerable.

Keeping a record will save you time and effort when you come to review and update it. It will also show that you have carried out a risk assessment if the Fire Service visit your premises.

You will find an example of what a written record of significant findings **could** look like on page 10 of this booklet, along with a blank form (page 11) which you may want to photocopy and fill in for your premises. You can download this form for free from our website www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety.

? What do I do next?

You need to carry out a fire risk assessment.

Follow the five key steps on pages 6 and 7. We have developed the checklist on pages 8 and 9 to help you go through the necessary steps.

If you have any questions, please turn to the questions and answers on page 12.

To find out where to get more information see page 18.

➔ **Taking the time to carry out and act on your risk assessment protects you, your guests, your premises and your business.**



FOLLOW THE FIVE KEY STEPS

Assess your fire risk and work out how to keep people and your premises safe.

Make a plan for how to improve fire safety measures in your premises.

Keep a record of your assessment and use it to carry out regular reviews.

The checklist on pages 8 and 9 may help you record all the important information.

For more advice on what may be appropriate fire safety measures, see the questions and answers section on page 12.

STEP 1

What is a fire hazard?

Think about how a fire could start on your premises.

You need to go around your premises, inside and out, and look for hazards.

Fire starts when heat comes into contact with fuel (anything that burns) and oxygen in the air. You need to keep heat and fuel apart.

- > For example, look for:
 - naked flames;
 - heaters;
 - electrical equipment;
 - signs of smoking;
 - matches; and
 - anything else that gets very hot or causes sparks.

Look carefully at kitchens where people work near naked flames, laundry rooms, and guest bedrooms where people may bring matches and candles or areas where they may smoke.

Think about what could burn and how quickly a fire could spread.

- > For example, laundry, curtains, furniture and cooking oil could all burn, just like the more obvious fuels such as petrol, paint, varnish and white spirit.
- > Check outside for fuel too. For example, rubbish can burn. If this happens, could a fire spread to inside the property or affect the escape route?
- > Think about how your property is built – for example, are walls made of brick, hardboard or chipboard? Are there polystyrene tiles on the ceiling?

STEP 2

Who is at risk?

Everyone is at risk if there is a fire.

You need to think about yourself, your family, your guests, your staff (if you have any) and anyone else who visits the premises. Some people are likely to be at more risk than others.

- > For example, young children, the elderly or those with disabilities may be particularly vulnerable, as well as those who are not familiar with the layout of the building.

STEP 3

What is your plan to keep people safe?

Using what you have found in steps 1 and 2 you should be able to remove or reduce the hazards you have found.

- > For example, think about whether a heat source, such as a hair dryer, could fall, be knocked or pushed into something that would burn. Is your electrical equipment modern and working properly?

Now think about what you need to do if there is a fire on your premises

How will it be detected and how will you alert people on the premises?

- > For example, do you have an automatic fire detection system? Are the detectors in the right place? Is the system tested regularly? Can you hear the alarm in each bedroom? Is the alarm loud enough to wake someone who is sleeping?

What action will you take to protect people on your premises and make sure everyone can find their way out in an emergency?

- > You need to make sure your guests (and any staff) know what to do if there is a fire. Will everyone on the premises be able to find their way out in an emergency? Have you practiced a fire drill? Do you have equipment to allow someone to put a small fire out? Is it simple to use or would people need training?

STEP 4

Record, plan and train

It is a good idea to keep a written record of the significant findings from your risk assessment. This should include:

- > any fire hazards you have found and what you have done to reduce or remove them; and
- > any more action you plan to take to improve fire safety arrangements and when you plan to do it.

A form for you to record your findings and the improvements you have or plan to make is available on page 11 of this booklet.

STEP 5

Maintain your fire risk assessment

Your written record should be seen as a helpful, living document. It's not something that should be completed and then forgotten.

- > You should review the assessment regularly and, if necessary, update it.
- > Over time, the risks may change, particularly if you make any changes in the way you use your premises, or if you change the layout.
- > If your review shows new or different risks, you must make a plan to deal with these to make sure everyone stays as safe as possible.
- > It makes sense to keep a written record of the findings of your risk assessment and any new plan that you make.

Use this checklist to help you carry out your risk assessment.

1. What is a fire hazard

- Have you found anything that could start a fire?
Make a note of it.
- Have you found anything that could burn?
Make a note of it.

2. Who is at risk?

- Make a note of who could be at risk, particularly anyone likely to be vulnerable.

3. What is your plan to keep people safe?

- Have you kept fuel and heat apart?
- Have you assessed the risk to guests and other visitors and to staff (if you have any)?
- If someone wanted to start a fire deliberately, is there anything around they could use?
- Do you regularly maintain and service household appliances?
- Will you know if there is a fire?
- How will you make sure everyone gets out?
- Who will phone the Fire Service?
- Could a small fire be put out quickly to stop it spreading?
- Have you planned escape routes?
- Have you made sure people will be able to find their way out safely, even at night?
- Does all your safety equipment work and is it maintained?
- Will people know what to do and how to use any equipment?

4. Record, plan and train

- Have you removed or reduced any risks you have found?
- Have you made a note of what you have done to remove or reduce these risks?
- Have you made a record of what you plan to do to deal with any risks which you cannot remove?
- Have you got a timeframe for carrying out any necessary improvements?
- Have you told your family and any staff, what to do in any emergency?
- Have you practiced a fire drill and recorded how it went?
- Do you know how to use any fire extinguishers that are available?
- Have you made information on the emergency plan and escape routes available to guests?
- Have you told your guests what to do if they discover a fire?

5. Maintain your plan

- Have you made any changes to the building inside or out?
- Has there been, or almost been, a fire?
- Have you changed the way you work?
- Have you planned your next fire drill?



An example risk assessment form

This example of a record of the findings may give you some idea of what you may need to cover in your own risk assessment.

Risk Assessment – Record of significant findings		
Risk assessment for		Assessment carried out by
Building: Orange House Farm Bed & Breakfast Address: High Lane Any Town AA11 6ZZ		Date: 17/8/08 Completed by: A Smith Signature: <i>A. Smith</i>
Floor/area: A two storey farmhouse with six bedrooms. Two first floor bedrooms for B&B guests and rest of the farmhouse shared with family.		Use: Farmhouse providing bedrooms for bed & breakfast, other facilities shared with family.
Step 1 – Fire hazards		
Sources of ignition	Sources of fuel	Sources of oxygen
Heat from cooking Smoking materials Tumble dryer	Cooking oils Furniture and bedding Clothes in laundry/tumble dryer area	Cleaning materials (Peroxides in cleaning store)
Step 2 – People at risk		
Guests anywhere in the house, including any who are elderly, disabled or very young		
Step 3 – Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk		
What is the risk?	Risk from cooking no greater than when family alone occupying premises, smoking not allowed by guests, no family members smoke	
Who is at risk?	Fire can spread throughout the building, guests are never alone in the premises always family member here, everyone at risk during the night when asleep	
Action taken to remove and reduce the hazards that may cause a fire	Chip pan replaced with deep fat fryer with thermostat Peroxides limited to one small bottle Interlinked smoke alarms with 10 year batteries fitted in bedrooms and landing on first floor and in lounge on ground floor	
Action taken to remove and reduce the risk to people from a fire	All family members know the fire escape plan, and how to use the kitchen fire extinguisher. Information leaflet in all bedrooms showing escape route Routine established of closing all doors at night and making sure everything turned off. 2 x ill-fitting doors replaced by solid timber doors.	
Assessment/review		
Assessment/review date	Completed by	Signature

You may want to use this blank form as the template for your own record of your risk assessment findings. You can photocopy it or download more copies from www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety

Risk Assessment – Record of significant findings		
Risk assessment for		Assessment carried out by
Building: Address:		Date: Completed by: Signature:
Floor/area:		Use:
Step 1 – Fire hazards		
Sources of ignition	Sources of fuel	Sources of oxygen
Step 2 – People at risk		
Step 3 – Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk		
What is the risk?		
Who is at risk?		
Action taken to remove and reduce the hazards that may cause a fire		
Action taken to remove and reduce the risk to people from a fire		
Assessment/review		
Assessment/review date	Completed by	Signature

? Do I have to carry out a fire risk assessment?

Yes. If you provide any guest accommodation the law says you have to do this.

? What if it's my own home?

If you have any paying guests, even in your own home, you must comply with the law on fire safety and carry out a risk assessment. A fire in small premises is just as dangerous as one in a larger property. Nearly all the people who die in fires in this country are trapped in domestic premises.

? I only take in a few guests at a time. Do I need to comply?

Yes.

If your premises are similar to a family home, the fire safety precautions you will need to take are likely to be simpler than those needed for larger premises with more complicated layouts and staff. However, there is no absolute definition of 'small' premises, so you must use your common sense.

So, if your premises are larger than a family home, or include long (probably more than 12 metres), unusual or complicated routes to the exit, you will probably need to consider more sophisticated fire safety arrangements than are covered here.

If this is the case, see our Sleeping Accommodation fire safety risk assessment guide for more information. You can download a copy from www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety or phone 0300 123 1124 to buy a copy (for £12).

? 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. It is your responsibility to carry out a risk assessment and put in place measures to protect anyone staying there.

? Why do I have to carry out a risk assessment?

The law changed in 2006 because the Government believes that those who own or run businesses are the best people to understand and manage fire safety on their premises.

Risks change over time and, as the people who run the business, you will be in the best position to find these and to take action. We believe this is a better, more flexible way of making sure we have a high standard of fire safety than the old system of issuing fire certificates. Under the previous legislation, it was all too easy for a business owner to forget about fire safety once a fire certificate had been issued.

? I have a fire certificate – do I need to do anything?

Yes. You will need to carry out a fire risk assessment. Fire certificates have been abolished and any that were issued previously are no longer valid.

? What happens if I don't do an assessment?

You are breaking the law, and you could be putting people's lives at risk. The point of a risk assessment is to reduce the risks and plan how to keep people safe if there is a fire. If you fail to do this, you are putting your guests, your property and your business at risk. You may be inspected by the Fire Service, as part of its responsibility to enforce the law or, someone staying with you or working for you may report you to them if they feel at risk.

If you are inspected by the Fire Service, they will want to know that you have carried out a risk assessment. Keeping a written record of your risk assessment is an easy way to show that you have taken fire safety seriously.

If the Fire Service don't consider the measures you have taken or plan to take good enough to adequately protect people, you will have a chance to put things right. If you fail to do this, the Fire Service may serve a notice on you that means you must put in place better fire safety measures. Ultimately, they could take legal action against you and your business may be closed down.

? Will I be inspected by my local Fire Service?

Possibly. The Fire Service usually carry out inspections of premises in their area according to the risk they pose. Any building that has people sleeping in it is likely to be considered a high risk. The Fire Service will want to know that you have done a risk assessment and that the fire safety arrangements you have put in place are good enough.

? What if the Fire Service think I haven't done enough?

There are a range of measures the Fire Service can take.

If they think you need to improve your fire safety, they can give you advice on what measures may be appropriate for you to take, and agree a time period for you to make the improvements.

They can take formal enforcement action if they find a serious fire risk that you are not managing. This will mean you will have to carry out specific fire safety improvements.

In all their dealings with you, you can expect the Fire Service to offer advice on measures that are reasonable according to the risk in your particular premises.

They should always explain why such measures are needed.

? Will it be expensive to improve my fire safety measures?

It all depends on your business and your premises. You may have to improve your fire safety measures and there may be a cost attached to this investment.

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 fire safety products which have been designed for larger and more complicated premises.

You should get all safety equipment tested regularly. You may find it useful to keep a written record of your tests and the results.

? How can I take account of the needs of guests with disabilities?

You will need to think about this and make a plan. It is not enough to rely on the intervention of the Fire Service.

We have produced information to help you consider the needs of disabled people. This includes advice on developing plans to evacuate the building. You can download 'Guidance on the Means of Escape for Disabled People' for free from www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety or phone 0300 123 1124 to get a copy (for £5).

? Will I need to fit a new fire alarm system, fire escapes, fire doors, sprinklers and so on?

What you need will depend on your business and your premises. The law does not require any particular measures to be in place. What it does say is that you must adequately manage the overall risk.

There is likely to be a range of prevention and protection measures possible in individual premises. As the person responsible for fire safety in your premises, you will need to use your judgement to decide what is most appropriate. You need to consider the hazards you have found, the risks to, and the needs of, those staying or working there, and the character of the building. For example, what may be appropriate in a modern self-catering bungalow is unlikely to be the same as for a 300-year old coaching house.

You can decide what fire safety measures may do this best from the range of available options providing they are adequate to address the risk you have identified.

In this booklet, we offer some practical advice on what measures may be suitable for many smaller, more domestic-type premises. More advice on a fuller range of specific and technical measures that you may need to consider – particularly if you have larger premises – is available in the Sleeping Accommodation fire safety risk assessment guidance. You can download this for free from www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety or you can phone 0300 123 1124 and order a copy (£12).

? Do I need an automatic fire-detection and alarm system?

Premises similar to a family home (i.e. two or three storeys) are likely to need an automatic fire detection system that runs from the mains electricity (with battery back-up) and consists of interconnected detectors. Detectors will be needed in the staircase, corridors and bedrooms. This (technically known as a Grade D LD2 system) has been designed for domestic premises.

In the very smallest accommodation (no more than two storeys) which only has two or three guest bedrooms and short travel distances to a safe place outside, a connected system

of detectors with a 10-year battery, or radio interlinked detectors may be good enough. (Technically, this is known as a Grade F LD2 system). You may be able to fit a Grade F system yourself.

A heat detector in the kitchen should be linked to the rest of the Grade D or Grade F system.

Whatever system you fit will need to be tested regularly to check it works and is loud enough to wake anyone sleeping. Similar systems, based on vibration units and flashing lights, are available to protect people with hearing difficulties.

Please note: A properly conducted risk assessment may show a variation to these standards is needed. Larger premises are likely to need a more sophisticated system with a control panel and manual call points.

? Should I provide fire fighting equipment?

One extinguisher on each floor near the stairs and a fire blanket in the kitchen should be enough in most small premises. You will need to make sure that the instructions on how to use them are clear and that there is a warning to people not to tackle anything other than a very small fire. Evacuating the premises is the safest thing to do.

You can buy suitable multi-purpose extinguishers, guaranteed for five years, from a range of larger DIY outlets. You should check the gauge regularly to make sure the 'stored pressure' has not leaked.

? What should an evacuation plan and instructions cover?

If your fire alarm goes off during the night when people are asleep they will evacuate more quickly if you have told them what they need to do at the beginning of their stay.

A simple plan may be useful for guests. This could include instructions on the back of their bedroom door and information in a welcome pack.

You should tell everyone to leave the building immediately by the identified route when they hear the alarm. You should plan to phone the Fire Service from outside the premises.

? How can I make sure everyone can get out of the premises?

Apart from providing information on what to do when the alarm goes off, you need to make sure that any escape routes can be used safely. An escape route includes any rooms, corridors and stairs which you have to go through to escape from a building.

You should keep all doors which open on to escape routes closed, especially at night. This is very important in the kitchen. If you leave doors open, it is less likely you will escape safely, even if the room has a fire detector. Although self-closing devices are a good way to make sure doors are closed, they can impact on the appearance and affect how you use the premises. If you decide these would be unsuitable, 'in-frame closers' or rising-butt hinges may be acceptable alternatives.

Doors need to be strong enough to hold back smoke and fire long enough to give you time to escape. For small premises, a reasonably solid timber door that fits well into its frame is likely to be good enough. Any internal hollow 'egg-box'-type door would not offer adequate protection and should be replaced.

Exit doors, such as the front or back door, should always be easy to unlock and must not need a key to unlock from the inside. A simple Yale-type latch or thumb turn is usually good enough.

? Do I need to provide emergency lighting?

Normal light switches should be easy to find. If a fire knocks out the normal inside lighting, you should think about whether any 'borrowed lighting', for example from nearby street lamps, would be enough to allow people on the premises to find their way out. If not, it may be acceptable, in small premises, to rely on rechargeable torches which come on automatically if the main supply fails. You should have one in each room with a sign that says what they are for.

Larger premises will need more sophisticated emergency lighting systems.

? Do I need to provide fire escape signs?

Signs are only required where they are needed. In small premises the escape route and the front door are likely to be obvious, so there may not be a need for emergency exit signs. You should include details of the escape route in the information pack you give to guests.

You should have emergency exit directional signs showing any less obvious or more complicated escape routes.

? Who can help me carry out a fire risk assessment?

You are likely to be best placed to understand and manage fire safety in your premises. So, you should be able to carry out the risk assessment yourself following the five key steps on pages 6 and 7, using the information in this booklet and, if necessary, using more detailed information in the Sleeping Accommodation Guidance.

You can also ask or employ someone to help you carry out your risk assessment. You may consider this person to have greater knowledge, experience or expertise than you. For example, you may know someone who has experience of carrying out a risk assessment and who can help you.

Or, you may feel more comfortable employing a fire safety specialist to help you. Companies providing fire safety services are listed in local directories. Details of companies which are members of a registered scheme are available, for example, on the Institution of Fire Engineers website at www.ife.org.uk/frr and at Bodycote Warrington at www.warringtonfire.net/riskassessor. Alternatively, you may be able to ask your insurers for a recommendation.

If you choose to employ a fire safety consultant to help you, we recommend you get several quotes for the work and ask for references from other similar premises before you make a decision.

? What is the role of the Fire Service? Can they help me?

The Fire Service has a legal responsibility to make sure you are complying with fire safety law and you are managing the fire risks adequately.

The Fire Service also has a legal duty to promote fire safety and can provide information and advice on fire prevention. They cannot carry out the fire risk assessment for you.

Remember, if you are responsible for the premises, you are legally responsible for making sure you comply with the law.

? Some Fire Services take different approaches – why?

Each Fire Service is required by law to identify the risks in its area. It will have a plan for reducing and managing these based on its local risk profile.

Each Fire Service must use its professional expertise to decide whether the fire safety measures that are in place in any particular premises are appropriate and would protect people adequately in a fire. Because of variations in, for example, the age, size, construction, layout, use of the building and those likely to be in it, there can be no 'one size fits all' approach to fire safety.

All premises are different, as are the people who own, manage or stay in them. What may be considered good enough protection in one premises, may not be considered good enough in another.

? What happens if I disagree with the result of an inspection by the Fire Service?

Fire Services will, where appropriate, give you support and advice on how to improve your fire safety. They must consider measures that are proportionate and reasonable to address the particular risks they find at your premises. If the risk is not immediate or high, they can agree with you an appropriate time period to make the necessary improvements.

If you do not make the recommended improvements within the agreed time, or if the Fire Service finds a serious fire risk that you are not managing, they have a legal responsibility to make sure you comply with the law. If necessary, they can take you to court. The first step is for the Fire Service to serve you with an enforcement notice, which means you have to make specific improvements in a specific time.

If during an inspection, an inspecting officer finds that the Fire Service is likely to give you a formal enforcement notice, in some cases, you may be able to arrange for an informal review by a more senior manager in the fire safety department.

You are able to challenge an enforcement notice in a magistrates' court and it is quite simple to do. You will have 21 days, from the day on which it is served, in which to lodge an appeal with the court. If you think an appeal may be appropriate, you may want to get legal advice from a solicitor.

In some cases you may agree with the Fire Service that you need to improve your fire precautions, but you cannot agree on what action you need to take. In these circumstances, you and the Fire Service may agree to approach the Secretary of State, who will decide what fire precautions need to be put in place. This process is called a 'determination'. Both the Fire Service and the person responsible for fire safety on the premises have to agree to approach the Secretary of State.

If the Fire Service think a determination might cause a delay which would put people's safety at an unacceptable risk, they can decide not to seek one. In this case, you would have to appeal in the courts.

? What happens once I have done the fire risk assessment?

You should make a note of what you have found, and the measures you have put in place. By law, you must have a written plan if you have five or more staff, 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 your solicitor).
- Have it available in case you are inspected by the Fire Service.
- Revise it regularly – at least once a year – and when you make any changes to your premises, such as if you add another guest bedroom, or change the layout of the property.

If you are planning to make changes to your premises, you may need to comply with planning and building control law, especially if your premises has listed buildings status.

? Will it affect my star rating?

As part of the quality or star-rating scheme, VisitBritain and the AA require businesses to comply with all the legal responsibilities they have. If you do not carry out a risk assessment, this will affect your rating.

Neither VisitBritain nor the AA will take a view on the adequacy of the fire safety arrangements you have put in place - they are not fire safety experts.

For more questions and answers about fire safety law, visit:

www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety

or

www.wales.gov.uk/fire

For detailed information about your premises providing sleeping accommodation, see our technical guide to fire safety risk assessments in sleeping accommodation. You can download a copy for free from our website at www.communities.gov.uk/firesafety or you can phone 0300 123 1124 and order one (for £12).

You can also download or order (£5) the supplementary guide 'Means of Escape for Disabled People', which provides information on accessibility and means of escape.

To contact your local Fire Service check the number in your local phone book or visit www.firegateway.gov.uk

Additional information is also available from:

VisitBritain
Website: www.visitbritain.com/quality

The Bed & Breakfast Association
Website: www.bandbassociation.org

English Association of Self-Catering Operators
Website: www.englishselfcatering.co.uk

British Hospitality Association
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