

# FIRE SAFETY GUIDE

Commercial tenant responsibilities and best practice

## Legal duty

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (England & Wales) and the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, the person in control of the premises (typically the tenant) has a legal duty to undertake fire risk assessments and implement appropriate measures. This is not optional.

## Who is responsible?

The "Responsible Person" in law is whoever has control over the premises. In most commercial tenancies, this is the tenant. If there are multiple tenants sharing a building, each tenant is responsible for their demise, and the landlord is usually responsible for common areas.

## The fire risk assessment

Every commercial tenant must carry out a written fire risk assessment if they have five or more employees. Even with fewer employees, it is strongly recommended and often required by your lease and your insurer.

### A fire risk assessment must cover:

- Identification of fire hazards — sources of ignition, fuel, oxygen
- Identification of people at risk — employees, visitors, vulnerable persons
- Evaluation of risk and actions to remove or reduce it
- Recording findings, preparing an emergency plan, and training staff
- Review and update — at least annually, or when circumstances change

## Essential equipment and checks

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Fire detection/alarm | <b>Weekly test, annual service</b>          |
| Emergency lighting   | <b>Monthly functional, annual full test</b> |
| Fire extinguishers   | <b>Monthly visual, annual service</b>       |
| Fire doors           | <b>Monthly visual, 6-month inspection</b>   |
| Escape routes        | <b>Daily check — clear of obstruction</b>   |
| Fire exits           | <b>Daily — unobstructed, clearly signed</b> |
| Assembly point       | <b>Clearly identified and signed</b>        |

## Daily checks (your staff should do these)

- All fire exits clear and unlocked during occupation
- Fire doors closed and not wedged open
- Escape routes free of obstruction and combustible materials
- Fire extinguishers in place and with seals intact
- Nothing stored in stairwells or corridors

## Fire prevention basics

- Keep combustible materials well away from heat sources
- Do not overload electrical sockets
- Turn off equipment at end of day where practical
- Dispose of rubbish daily and store waste away from buildings
- Prohibit smoking except in designated, safe areas
- Report damaged electrical cables immediately
- Keep kitchens and catering areas clean and well-ventilated

## What to do if fire breaks out

**Step 1 — Raise the alarm.** Operate the nearest manual call point or shout "FIRE" to alert others.

**Step 2 — Evacuate.** Use the nearest safe exit. Do not stop to collect belongings. Do not use lifts.

**Step 3 — Assemble.** Go directly to the designated assembly point. Do not re-enter the building.

**Step 4 — Call 999.** Even if the alarm has sounded, make sure the fire service has been called.

**Step 5 — Head count.** Account for all staff and visitors. Report any missing persons to the fire service.

**Step 6 — Wait.** Do not re-enter the building until the fire service has given clearance.

### Only tackle a fire if safe

Never tackle a fire that is bigger than a waste bin. Never put yourself between the fire and your exit. Fire extinguishers should only be used by trained staff and only on small, contained fires. Your safety is always the priority.

## Training and drills

- All staff must be trained in fire safety procedures on induction
- Refresher training at least annually
- Fire drills at least twice yearly, records kept
- Designated fire wardens for larger premises
- Training records must be kept for inspection

## Record keeping

Fire safety records are your primary defence if something goes wrong. Keep a "fire safety log book" containing:

- Fire risk assessment and review dates
- Maintenance records for all fire safety equipment
- Records of alarm tests and drills
- Staff training records
- Any incidents or near misses
- Actions taken from previous inspections

## Enforcement and penalties

Fire safety is enforced by the local Fire and Rescue Service. Enforcement actions range from advisory notices and improvement notices through to prohibition notices and criminal prosecution. Serious breaches can result in unlimited fines and up to two years in prison for the responsible person.

**Need help?**

Fire safety is not something to guess at. If you need a professional fire risk assessment, or help understanding your responsibilities, we can connect you with qualified assessors. Call 0141 255 0742 or email [hello@levinandwhitmore.com](mailto:hello@levinandwhitmore.com).