

Fire Safety & Risk Assessment For Catering Establishments

Fire Safety law is undergoing change with the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 due in October 2006. Premises such as food businesses will be affected, however the fundamental principles are still the same:



- Controlling fire risks, preventing fire in the first place.
- Early warning in case of fire.
- Adequate escape routes.
- Adequate training and information for staff.

Legislation

Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 (as amended)

In any building where people are 'at work', the employer must carry out a suitable assessment of the fire risks to the employees, taking into account others resorting to the building.

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

This Order is due to come into force in October 2006 and it will replace the above two pieces of legislation. It requires the person who has control of the premises, the responsible person, to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the fire risks associated with the premises. This risk assessment must take account of all persons who may be affected by a fire in the premises i.e. staff, and others.

Note: This legislation does not just affect employers as was previously the case, but all premises to which members of the public have access.

The fire authority advises that you should carry out a risk assessment now, which would satisfy the new legislation, as it is unlikely to contravene the current legislation. This means that when the legislation changes you will already be compliant.

Fire Risk Assessment

Performing a risk assessment is easy. It must also be remembered that it must be regularly reviewed to ensure that it is current.

Here are the five steps:

1. Identify potential fire hazards.
2. Decide who might be in danger in the event of a fire.
3. Evaluate the risk arising from the hazard – identifying what could be done to control the hazard if not controlled by existing arrangements.
4. Record your findings and detail the actions you have taken or record if you consider existing arrangements to be adequate. (Not mandatory if you employ less than five employees, however recording your risk assessment regardless of the size of your premises is considered "Best Practice" and is strongly recommended by the Fire Service).
5. Keep the assessment under review and revise as and when necessary.

Expanding on the five steps above, the following needs to be taken into account with respect to food businesses:

- Fire hazards should be identified and controlled e.g. smoking materials, cooking areas, heating, electrical apparatus and wiring, gas, flammable materials, hot work.
- People need to be alerted to the outbreak of fire, so there must be a means for raising the alarm. Examples of this may range from shouting or using whistles, to very sophisticated alarm systems incorporating automatic detectors throughout the premises. Most food businesses would probably fall somewhere in the middle, where a manually operated electrical alarm system would be the most reliable. Whatever system is chosen, it is vital that it can be heard throughout the building.
- Once people are alerted, they need a good escape route that is protected from risk areas by closed doors, well lit and free from obstruction. They will need a door to escape through which is not locked from the inside.
- Should it be necessary to tackle a very small fire, to enable others to escape, then suitable fire fighting equipment should be provided. Ordinarily this would include at least one fire extinguisher at each level and a fire blanket in any kitchen area.
- Importantly, you will need a means of summoning assistance from the fire service – typically a telephone box, mobile phone or an agreement with a neighbour.
- It is imperative that the staff are aware of the fire safety measures. This requires regular staff training sessions to cover all aspects of fire safety within the premises, including their responsibility for others who may be on the premises. Training based on written instructions should be carried out on induction and at least annually thereafter.
- To ensure that fire safety management of the premises is effective it is necessary to keep records of; weekly fire alarm tests, monthly emergency lighting tests, monthly fire fighting equipment inspections and six monthly staff training sessions.
- Fire safety need not be expensive but you must think the issues through and control the hazards. If you require specific advice, please feel free to contact a fire safety officer and discuss it.

Guidance Material

Further guidance on the current law and risk assessment is available in the document 'Fire Safety – An Employer's Guide'. This document is now out of print but can be viewed online at: www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/documents/fire/index.htm. The government are also publishing guidance booklets to assist you in complying with the new fire safety law. One of these will contain detailed advice on carrying out a fire risk assessment and the various fire safety measures necessary in your premises. It may soon be viewed via links from the following website: www.esfrs.org as well as being available from The Stationary Office, www.tso.co.uk/bookshop, and good bookshops.

Fire Safety Checklist

Complete the tick boxes for all the questions. If you answer 'No' to any of the questions, this would indicate that you need to take further action. The answer may be provided on the guidance sheet. If you are in any doubt, then please contact the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service on **0845 130 8855** or visit their website at **esfrs.org**



Risk Assessment	Yes	No	n/a
Has a risk assessment been carried out?			
Are the hazards clearly identified (e.g. smoking, cooking, heating, electrics, gas, flammable materials, hot work)?			
Are the hazards being adequately controlled?			
Fire Alarms			
Is there a means for raising the alarm?			
Can the alarm be heard in all occupied areas?			
Is the alarm tested weekly?			
Is the premises fitted with an electrical alarm system incorporating manual call points?			

If not describe the alarm system:

Escape Routes			
Are there clearly identifiable escape routes with correct signage where necessary?			
Are there doors separating the escape routes from the risk rooms (kitchen, store, process area etc)?			
Are the escape routes free from obstructions and combustible materials?			
Can all doors on escape routes be easily opened from the inside without the use of a key, card or digital lock?			
Emergency Lighting			
Is emergency lighting installed on the escape routes?			
If yes, is it tested on a monthly basis?			
If there is no emergency lighting, is there enough borrowed light (from street lighting or other) to safely negotiate the escape routes if they are used during the hours of darkness?			

Fire Fighting Equipment	Yes	No	n/a
Is there an adequate provision of fire fighting equipment (water, extinguishers; at least one per floor, other extinguishers appropriate to risk, fire blanket in the kitchen)?			

Describe any deficiencies:

Is the fire fighting equipment inspected regularly by the occupier and annually by a qualified engineer?			
Fire Safety Management			
Is there a method for summoning the fire service without placing anyone at risk?			
Do the staff receive regular fire safety training regarding all of the above items including their actions in the event of a fire?			
Are records kept of the following:			
Fire alarm tests?			
Emergency Lighting tests?			
Fire fighting equipment inspections?			
Staff training?			

Provide details of any other installations present or any other positive or negative comments: