**Advice on Fire precautions**

“A fire risk assessment is an organised and methodical look at your premises, the activities carried on there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the premises.”

1. **Identify fire hazards**

Identify:

* Sources of ignition e.g. cooking equipment, cigarettes, lighters, heaters, faulty or misused electrical equipment including lighting, naked flames, arson.
* Sources of fuel e.g. paints and varnishes, spirits, cooking oils, displays/ banners/ decorations, stationery, advertising material, polyurethane foam-filled furniture or cushions, litter.
* Sources of oxygen- in the air around us, but be aware of ventilation systems that can spread fire, and oxidising chemicals which can provide additional oxygen.

1. **Identify people at risk**

Identify:

* People in and around the premises
* People especially at risk e.g. those managing the event or building, those who work alone or in isolated areas (e.g. cleaners), unaccompanied children, users who are unfamiliar with the premises, those with disabilities including mobility impairment, hearing or vision impairment etc.

In complex buildings with large public use you may need professional advice.

1. **Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk:**

* **Evaluate the risk of a fire occurring** either accidentally (e.g. cigarette not fully extinguished, heater knocked over), by act or omission, (e.g. electrical equipment not properly maintained and allowed to become dangerous,) or accumulation of waste near heat source, or deliberately (e.g. arsonist sets fire to bins against wall.)
* **Evaluate the risk to people**

Consider the risk to people from a fire starting at one of the likely risk locations you have identified. Also consider how likely it is that any particular fire will occur and spread. Fire spreads by convection (smoke and heat rise until trapped by ceilings then spread outwards), conduction (metals absorb heat and transmit it to the next room or to further combustible materials) and radiation (the air absorbs heat and materials absorb heat until they also start to burn). As well as heat there are dangers from smoke- toxic gases, obscured vision, difficulty breathing and escaping.

* **Remove or reduce fire hazards**

Remove or reduce the hazards identified in Step 1, taking care not to increase other risks (e.g. there is little gain in replacing a flammable substance with a potentially toxic one).

* **Remove or reduce sources of ignition**: for example: replace radiant heaters with fixed convector heaters or central heating; introduce controls for naked flames and keep away from curtains, displays etc; prohibit smoking or provide ashtrays; ensure electrical/ gas equipment is professionally maintained and serviced, including cooking appliances, take precautions to avoid arson.
* **Remove or reduce sources of fuel**: ensure soft furnishings are fire-retardant; ensure waste is not allowed to build up; store equipment in suitable areas; reduce stocks of flammable materials in public areas and keep minimum amounts of stock on the premises, and in restricted areas preferable outside the main building;
* **Remove or reduce the risks to people**

The level of fire protection should be proportional to the risk posed- the objective should be to reduce the remaining risk to as low a level as possible.

* Detection and warning

In a small and simple building where any fire would be discovered quickly and where emergency exits are obvious and easy to reach, shouting ‘fire’ or a whistle should be sufficient.

If a single point of alarm is not sufficient (i.e. not everyone would be immediately aware of a fire) an electrical system including sounders and manual call points (break-glass boxes) may be needed.

In more complex buildings where a fire might be unknown to some of the occupants for some time an automatic fire detection system may be needed.

* Fire-fighting

Extinguishers can stop a small fire turning into a big one and give people time to escape. There are different types of extinguisher suitable for different types of fire. They should be located where they are easy to access and training given if you wish people to use them. Extinguishers need to be maintained by a competent service engineer and records kept.

* Escape routes

These should be designed to ensure any person can get themselves to safety without need of assistance, except in cases of those requiring special assistance (e.g. young children or those with mobility disabilities). There may be a need to consider the maximum number of people who can be allowed on the premises, if escape routes are limited, or to prevent overcrowding- the numbers may be different depending on the type of event and building layout.

Exit routes and/ or emergency exits should be signposted, doors should open in the direction of travel when escaping from the building, and ideally without need for a key. Corridors should be kept clear.

* Lighting

People should be able to find their way out of the building even if the main lighting has failed, so some emergency lighting is required- this might be as simple as torches in suitable places or automatic emergency lighting may be needed.

* Signs and notices

Signs are needed to help identify escape routes and fire-fighting equipment, e.g. reflective signs over doors. These must include pictograms (not just text). Notices on fire-fighting equipment should include instructions and action to be taken in event of fire.

* Maintenance

Fire-fighting equipment, devices (e.g. alarms, lighting) and fittings such as fire doors and signs must be kept in working order, with regular checks and servicing.

1. **Record, plan, inform, instruct and train**

* Record significant findings and action taken
* Prepare an emergency plan- make sure everyone in charge of an event on your premises knows what to do in the event of fire- what areas they need to check, any special arrangements for those with particular needs
* Inform and instruct relevant people; cooperate and coordinate with others about your plans

Especially staff who work outside normal working hours, e.g. cleaners. Consider those with particular needs or disabilities or who do not speak English as their first language.

* Provide training- how do people raise the alarm if they find a fire? What should they do next?

Run a fire drill at an appropriate time (i.e. when the building is in regular use) and assess to see if your plan works. Are any modifications needed? What went well, and what didn’t?

1. **Review**

* Keep assessment under review
* Revise where necessary

If the way you use your building changes, you alter the layout of the building or have new types of users, you will need to consider how this affects your plans.

**Further reading:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-small-and-medium-places-of-assembly>