

Fire Risk  
Assessment Principles  
for  
Church Premises  
The Regulatory  
Reform  
(Fire Safety)  
Order 2005

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The **Methodist** Church 

The Resourcing Mission Office of the Methodist Church and the Churches Main Committee

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## Fire Risk Assessment Principles For Church Premises The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

This information Booklet has been prepared by  
Colin Domville M.I.Fire.E (October 2006)

The **Fire Safety Order** replaces most fire legislation with one simple Order. It means that any person who has some level of control in a premises must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire.

If you previously carried out a fire risk assessment under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, as amended 1999, and this assessment has been regularly reviewed then all you will need to do now is to carry out another review taking account of those issues not covered by these Regulations. The Regulations apply to virtually all premises, every type of building, structure and open space. It does not apply to private dwellings.

The Fire Safety Order applies in England and Wales. It covers 'general fire precautions' and other fire safety duties, which are needed to protect 'relevant persons in case of **fire in and around** most 'premises'. Northern Ireland and Scotland have similar Fire Safety laws. The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 has similar regulations (see under Further Advice & Information)

The Order requires fire precautions to be put in place '**where necessary**' and to the extent that it is '**reasonable and practical**' in the circumstances of the case.

Responsibility for complying with the Fire Safety Order rests with the '**Responsible Person**'. In a workplace this would normally be the employer or any person who may have control of any part of the premises.

Those legally responsible for Churches i.e. The Managing Trustees who constitute the Church Council or similar, are Classed as the employer and will be responsible for appointing a '**Responsible Person**' who should carry out the Risk Assessment on behalf of the Trustees or Church Councils **who are legally responsible** for the implementation of the Fire Safety Order.

The Order does not require that a 'qualified' person has to carry out the Risk Assessment. In most cases this can be achieved without the need for any specialist or formal knowledge or training. The Managing Trustees can appoint one or more '**Competent Persons**' to assist them, and depending on the size of the premises, to carry out the preventative and protective measures required by the order. (The 'Responsible Person' i.e. the Managing Trustee Body can nominate one of their number or other specific named person for this purpose).

### The Fire Safety Order requires you to:

- 1 Carry out a Risk Assessment identifying any possible dangers or risks.
- 2 Consider who may be especially at risk.
- 3 Remove or reduce the risk from fire as far as is reasonably possible and provide general fire precautions to deal with any possible risk left.
- 4 Provide:
  - Means for detecting and giving a warning in case of fire,
  - Means of Escape and Emergency Lighting,
  - Fire Safety Signs, and
  - Fire Fighting Equipment.
- 5 Monitor and review the Risk Assessment & revise as appropriate,
- 6 Inform staff or their representative of the risks and provide training
- 7 Plan for an emergency and record your findings.

### Who enforces the Fire Safety Order?

The local Fire and Rescue Authority will enforce the Order in most premises.

They have the power to inspect your premises to check that you are complying with your duties under the Fire Safety Order. They will look for evidence that you have carried out a suitable fire risk assessment and acted upon the significant findings of that

assessment. If you have 5 or more employees you are required to keep a copy of the assessment.

In many premises the responsible person will be obvious but there may be times when a number of people will have some responsibility. In Church premises outside groups who hire the premises are also required to carry out their own assessments and the responsible person should ensure they have done so.

If the enforcing authority is dissatisfied with the outcome of your risk assessment or the action you have taken, they may issue an Enforcement Notice that requires you to make certain improvements or, in extreme cases, a Prohibition Notice that restricts the use of all or part of your premises until improvements are made.

Failure to comply with any duty imposed by the Order or any Notice issued by the enforcing authority is an offence. You have the right of appeal to a Magistrate's Court against any Notice issued. Where you agree that there is a need for improvements to your fire precautions but disagree with the enforcing authority on the technical solution (e.g. what type of fire alarm system is needed), you may agree to refer this for an independent determination.

## What is a fire Risk Assessment?

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.

The aims are to:

Identify the hazards, reduce the risk of those hazards causing harm to as low as is reasonably practicable.

To decide what physical fire precautions and management policies are necessary to ensure the safety of people in your building if a fire does start.

The term "**Hazard**" means anything that has the potential to cause harm.

The term "**Risk**" the chance of that harm occurring.

If you have five or more employees then the significant findings of the risk assessment, the actions taken and details of anyone especially at risk must be recorded. It will be helpful to keep a record even if you are not required to do so.

## How to carry out a Fire Risk Assessment

A fire risk assessment will help you determine the chances of a fire starting and the dangers from fire that your premises present for the people who use them and any person in the immediate vicinity. The

assessment method suggested in this guide shares the same approach as that used in general Health and Safety Legislation.

Much of the information for your risk assessment will come from the knowledge you have along with your colleagues of the premises, as well as information given to you by people who have responsibility for other parts of the building. A tour of the premises will be needed to confirm, amend or add detail to your initial views.

It must take the whole of your premises into account, including outdoor locations. If the premises are small you may be able to assess them as a whole. In larger premises you may find it helpful to divide them into rooms or a series of assessment areas using natural boundaries, e.g. worship or assembly rooms, corridors, stairways and external routes.

Your fire risk assessment should demonstrate that, as far as is reasonable, you have considered the needs of disabled people.

## There are 5 steps to a Risk Assessment

- **Identify Fire Hazard**
- **Identify People at Risk**
- **Evaluate, Remove, Reduce and Protect from Risk**
- **Record, Plan, Instruct, Inform and Train**
- **Review**

### Step 1 - Identify Fire Hazards

For a fire to start it needs sources of ignition (or heat) and fuel and oxygen.

If any one of these is missing a fire cannot start. If these hazards can be kept apart, removed or reduced, then the risks to people are minimized.

#### 1.1 Identify Sources of Ignition

All premises will contain possible sources of ignition. These could include;

Smoker's materials. Cigarettes, matches and lighters.

Naked flames such as candles.

Electrical, gas or oil-fired heaters.

Cooking lighting and electrical equipment.

You should also consider the potential for arson.

#### 1.2 Identify Sources of Fuel

Anything that burns is fuel for a fire.

These can be divided into two main groups;

- a) combustible fuels such as paper, wood, cardboard, etc; and
- b) highly combustible fuels such as thinners, solvents, polyurethane foam, etc. Also consider wall and ceiling linings, floor coverings and fixtures, fittings and furnishings etc.

### 1.3 Identify Sources of Oxygen

The main source of oxygen for a fire is the air around us through the doors, windows and other openings. Some buildings will also have mechanical air conditioning that may need to be switched off in the event of a fire.

### 1.4 Identify Any Unsafe Acts

Persons smoking next to combustibles, youth groups using portable cooking appliances.

### 1.5 Identify Any Unsafe Condition

These are hazards that may assist a fire to spread in the premises, i.e. storage of combustibles, open stairs that can cause a fire to spread quickly, trapping people and involving the whole building, and dead ends of corridors.

## Step 2 - Identify People at Risk

Consider the risk to any people who may be present. In many instances the risk will not be significant but it can often be a problem evacuating a large number of people from the church or a hall in safety.

There will be some occasions when certain people may be especially at risk from fire because of disability, sleeping, location or specific activity. You must consider all persons who may use the premises, if need be ask questions, as not all disabilities are obvious as you may need to put special provisions in place.

You need to consider the following: people who are unfamiliar with the premises, people working alone, if sleeping accommodation is provided, people unable to react quickly and not least yourself and helpers managing the premises. You should also be aware of other people who may be in the vicinity of the premises.

## Step 3 - Evaluate, Remove, Reduce and Protect From Risk

The management of the building and the way it is used will have an effect on the evaluation of risk. Management may be your responsibility alone or there may be others who may be renting the premises who also have responsibilities. You will need to liaise and consider any risk generated by others in the building.

Steps 1 and 2 will have helped you to identify what the hazards are and who may be at risk because of

them. You now need to evaluate the risk of a fire starting and **decide whether existing precautions are adequate or if more needs to be done.**

### Evaluate the risk of a fire occurring

The chances of a fire starting are considered low if you have few ignition sources and combustibles are kept away from them.

In general fires start in three ways;

- 1 Accidentally, such as smoking materials not being extinguished properly.
- 2 By act of omission, i.e. when items are not maintained regularly.
- 3 Deliberately, vandalism and arson attacks.

### Evaluate the risks to people

To evaluate the risk to people you need to understand the way fire can spread.

Fire can spread in three ways;

#### 1 Convection

Fires in enclosed spaces behave differently to those in open air. Smoke rising from the fire gets trapped by the ceiling to form an ever-deepening layer over the entire space. During this process the smoke will pass through any holes or gaps in the walls, ceiling or floor and eventually into other parts of the building. The heat from the fire also gets trapped in the building, greatly increasing the temperature.

There is an added danger to people due to the toxic gases in the smoke. People are therefore at a greater risk from a fire indoors than one outdoors.

#### 2 Conduction

Some materials such as ducting can absorb heat and transmit it to the next room where it can set fire to combustible materials that are in contact with the heated material.

#### 3 Radiation

Radiation heats the air in the same way an electric bar fire heats the room. Any material close to the fire will absorb the heat until it starts to smoulder and then burn.

It is essential that the means of escape and other fire precautions are adequate to ensure that everyone can make their escape to a place of safety before the fire and its effects can trap them in the building.

It is essential that the start of any fire is detected as quickly as possible and certainly before it can make the means of escape unusable.

You need to give particular attention to any areas, especially unoccupied ones, where there could be a delay in detecting the start of a fire that may prevent persons making their escape from the building.

Consider such situations as;

Fire starting in an assembly place where large numbers of people could be affected;

Fire starting on a lower floor affecting the exit routes from upper floors;

Fires starting in an unoccupied area that people have to pass by or through to escape;

Fire spreading due to incorrectly installed fire doors, fire doors wedged open, damaged or poorly maintained.

### **Remove or reduce the hazards**

Having identified the fire hazards in Step 1 you now need to remove those hazards if reasonably practical to do so. If you cannot remove them you need to take reasonable steps to reduce them if you can.

### **Remove or reduce sources of Ignition**

Wherever possible replace a potential source by a safer alternative.

Ensure all electrical equipment is installed correctly, used, maintained and protected to manufacturers' instructions.

Safeguarding the use of candles, using a candlesnuffer for extinguishing.

Replace naked flames and radiant heaters with fixed convector heaters or a central heating system.

Fire guard naked flames and restrict the movement of portable appliances.

Operate a **no smoking** policy.

Keep flammable materials away from sources of heat.

Take precautions to avoid the risk of arson.

### **Remove or reduce source fuel**

Removing flammable materials and reducing the amount stored.

Replacing or repairing damaged furniture where foam filling is exposed.

Ensuring good housekeeping.

Improving the fire resistance of the construction of the building where appropriate.

Ensure, where necessary that, curtains, drapes, upholstered seating and carpets have been treated with fire retardant materials.

Liquid gas cylinders, both full and empty should be stored in secure outside storage,

Camping equipment must not be stored on or close to heating pipes.

Care taken with flammable decorations.

Cleaning rags impregnated with wax polish can ignite spontaneously and therefore should be kept in metal-lidded containers.

Hassocks or kneelers with damaged covers should be repaired so as to avoid the internal foam becoming exposed.

Candles should be safely stored away from a heat source.

### **Remove or reduce sources of oxygen**

Closing all doors, windows and openings not required for ventilation. Shutting down ventilation systems when not in use.

### **Remove or reduce the risks to people from a fire**

Having evaluated and addressed the preventative measures it is unlikely that you will have concluded that there is no risk of fire starting and presenting a risk to people in your premises.

You now need to reduce the risk to people to as low as is reasonably practicable. This can be done in two ways:-

- Remove or reduce the risk at source by limiting the spread of fire and smoke.
- Ensure that adequate fire precautions are in place to warn people in the event of a fire.

### **Flexibility of Fire Protection Measures**

Flexibility will be required when applying this guidance; the level of fire protection should be proportional to the risk posed to the safety of the people in the premises. Therefore, the objective should be to reduce the remaining risk to a level as low as reasonably practicable. The higher the risk of fire and risk to life, the higher the standards of fire protection will need to be.

Your premises may not exactly fit the standards normally recommended in this guide and they need to be applied in a flexible manner without compromising the lives of the occupants by consideration of the following aspects.

### **Fire Detection and Fire Warning**

In places of worship which consist of mainly one large ground floor hall and in which people are led in an act of worship, the requirement for a fire warning system will be met if it is ensured that the following arrangements are in place;

- In the event of a fire the person making the discovery informs the person leading the

worship who requests the congregation to leave the building quietly

- Stewards proceed to designated exits, open the doors and assist people out of the building, particularly disabled people and any with impaired vision or hearing.

In small single storey premises the use of the word **FIRE** can be acceptable if it can be heard throughout the premises including toilets.

In small premises a manually operated device such as a rotary gong or air horn, or a simple manual call point, combined with a bell, battery and charger may be suitable. However, it must be positioned so that it can be operated for sufficient time to alert everyone without exposing the operator to danger.

Where necessary you may need to have an effective means of detecting fire and for warning the occupants quickly so they can escape to a safe place.

In larger, more extensive buildings it may be that an electrical fire warning system with manually operated call points, positioned both on exit routes and adjacent to final exits, is necessary. In large churches or cathedrals where foreign visitors may be present consider also the use of pre-recorded messages in appropriate languages.

Unoccupied areas may need a form of fire detection and smoke alarms may need to be provided linked to the alarm system to warn occupants especially those who only have a single means of escape route.

In some church premises a system of interconnected combined manual call points and sounders (in accordance with British Standard 5839: Part 6 domestic dwellings) may be acceptable instead of providing the normally recommended British Standard 5839: Part 1.

The Health and Safety (Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 require that if an electrical fire-warning system is necessary then guaranteed emergency back-up power supply should be provided

Where people have hearing difficulties then hearing the alarm may be a problem. If that person is never alone while on the premises then this may not be a serious problem as it would be reasonable for other occupants to let them know that the building should be evacuated. If a person with hearing difficulties may be alone then arrangements should be made for them to have a system of them being informed that the alarm has sounded, i.e. carrying a pager which is linked to the alarm.

## Fire-Fighting Equipment

Fire extinguishers are an essential element in the measures to reduce the risk to people from fire.

All premises should be provided with a means of fighting fire for use by people in the premises.

Church premises should have extinguishers supplied and regularly serviced by a contractor who complies with the British Standard EN 3 for new extinguishers and BS 5423 for existing ones. They should also be able to meet the requirements of the British Approvals for Fire Equipment (BAFE) scheme, which sets standards for installers of fire equipment.

### Number and type of extinguishers

In some premises multi-purpose extinguishers which can cover a range of risks, may be appropriate.

Generally, at least one water-based extinguisher should be provided for every 200m<sup>2</sup> of floor space, with a minimum of two extinguishers per floor.

In small premises a multi-purpose extinguisher which can cover a range of risks may be more appropriate. Depending on the outcome of your fire risk assessment, it may be possible to reduce this to one extinguisher in very small premises with a floor space of less than 90m<sup>2</sup>.

Extinguishers should be sited on escape routes, close to exit doors, or, if necessary, close to a hazard. They should be on a stand or hung at a convenient height at approx 1m from the floor. Ideally no one should travel more than 30m to reach an extinguisher.

People with no training should not be expected to extinguish a fire. However all stewards and officials in the church should be familiar with the location and basic operating procedures for the equipment provided, in case they need to use it.

### Fires are classified as follows:-

- Class A fires involving solid materials such as wood, paper etc;
- Class B fires involving liquids or liquefiable solids such as paints, oils or fats;
- Class C fires involving gases;
- Class D fires involving metals; and
- Class F fires involving cooking oils or fats.

**Class A** fires can be dealt with using water, foam (including multi-purpose aqueous film-forming foam, AFFF) or multi-purpose powder extinguishers with water and foam the most suitable.

**Class B** fires. It would be suitable to provide foam, AFFF, carbon dioxide or dry powder types. Water

extinguishers with additives can also be used for class B and are generally more efficient than conventional water extinguishers.

Dry powder and Carbon Dioxide are also suitable for fire involving electrical equipment.

**Class C** fires can be extinguished with dry powder but the use of them must be combined with a means of stopping any leak to prevent the risk of an explosion from the build-up of un-burnt gas.

**Class D** fires are not normally found in a church situation. Special extinguishers are required to be used by trained personnel.

**Class F** is a new classification and is primarily for larger kitchens and deep fat fryers. Special Wet Chemical extinguishers are now available for such situations.

The most common form of fire fighting is the water extinguisher. 9 litre water extinguishers are the common size but Hydrospray extinguishers are lighter in weight and because of a special nozzle can be more effective. The 3 litre size Hydrospray is equivalent to the 9 litre water extinguisher and 6 litre Hydrosprays are also available and give greater capacity to tackle some of the most common types of Class A fires involving wood and paper.

By providing AFFF extinguishers which have passed the 35kv test to clause 4.74 of BS 5423 1987 and specified for Class A & B risks in the proximity of live electrical equipment, the hazard of using water can be eliminated and operators do not have to decide if the extinguisher is suitable or not.

Hydrospray and AFFF are not suitable for DIRECT LIVE electrical equipment. All electrical equipment should be isolated before cleaning up the residue and operators must not stand in the foam pool when fighting the fire.

Direct live electrical equipment, such as a mains intake board, which cannot be isolated, should be provided with Carbon Dioxide or Dry Powder.

Church kitchens should be provided with a 2 litre AFFF extinguisher and not Dry Powder, as clearing up the residue from dry powder is extremely difficult because it can invade the total contents of a kitchen.

A 2kg Carbon Dioxide extinguisher can also be used as an alternative.

Fire blankets are usually provided in a kitchen and used for small fires involving containers of cooking oil or fats and fire involving clothing.

Hose reels can be provided in church premises but are more costly to maintain.

Fire extinguishers are colour coded to indicate their type. Previously the entire body has been colour coded, but BS EN 3/7 now requires all new

extinguisher bodies to be red with a zone of colour up to 5% to identify it. Old extinguishers **must not** be painted red to comply.

Extinguishers, if properly serviced and maintained, can last up to 20 years so there may be a mix of old and new in the same building.

It is advisable not to mix old and new in the same location.

Extinguisher colour bands are:

**Red—Water, Cream—Foam**  
**Blue—Dry Powder**  
**Black—Carbon Dioxide**

Fire extinguishers should normally be located on escape routes preferably near exit doors. They should be clearly visible or their location clearly and conspicuously indicated by an appropriate sign.

Halon, green, extinguishers have been banned for use in any situation since December 31st 2003, in response to the Montreal Protocol because of their ozone-depleting potential. Arrangements must be made to dispose of existing Halon extinguishers by a specialist company authorised to handle the gas.

Fixed sprinkler systems are not normally found in church premises. Their use is growing especially when there is a life risk and may become a feature in the future. Their use could be very important in protecting premises, which could be of heritage status and it would be difficult to replace accurately after a serious fire.

## Escape Routes

Once a fire has started, been detected and a warning given, everyone in the premises should be able to escape to a place of safety unaided and without the aid of a fire and rescue service. Some people with disabilities may need help from other people in the building.

Regardless of the location of a fire, once people are aware of it they should be able to proceed safely along a recognisable escape route to a place of reasonable safety. In order to achieve this, it may be necessary to protect the route, i.e. by providing fire-resisting construction.

The means of escape is likely to be satisfactory if the building is fairly modern and has had building regulation approval (and in each case you have not carried out any significant material or structural alterations). However you should still carry out a risk assessment to ensure that the means of escape remain adequate.

**When assessing the adequacy of the means of escape you will need to take into account:-**

- type and number of people using the premises

- escape time
- age and construction of the premises
- number and complexity of escape routes and exits
- assembly points
- the ability to escape without assistance.

### The type and number of people using the premises

The number and capability of people present will influence your assessment of the escape routes. You must ensure that the existing routes are sufficient to enable the maximum number of people likely to use the building at any time to escape. If necessary you may need to either increase the capacity of the escape routes or restrict the number of people in the premises.

When premises have been subject to Building Regulations approval, the number and width of escape routes and exits will normally be enough for the anticipated number of people using the building. In such buildings where the risk has changed or buildings were constructed before national Building Regulations it is still necessary to confirm the provision.

For most premises the maximum numbers of people likely to be in the building at the same time will be known to the responsible person from a personal knowledge of use patterns. There will also be an appreciation of the use of the building by those with special needs such as the disabled.

### Escape time

Escape routes in a building are designed so that people can escape quickly enough to ensure that they are not placed in any danger from fire. The time available will depend on the number of escape routes, the nature of the occupants and the speed of fire growth.

The aim is, from the time the alarm is raised, for everyone to be able to reach a place of safety, i.e. a storey exit, which is where that once through it, people are no longer in danger. It can be a final exit, or an exit to a protected lobby or staircase.

This time will depend on; time to react to a warning, what they are doing, what they have to do including helping other people, and their knowledge of the premises and any training having been given.

The means of escape requirements are based on a generally accepted method of limiting travel distances according to the potential fire risk of the building.

These distances ensure that people will be able to escape within the appropriate period of time.

**In general**, places can be assessed as high, normal or low risk. It would appear that most church premises would be normal or low risk.

**A normal risk** is where an outbreak of fire is likely to remain confined or only spread slowly, allowing people to escape to a place of safety. Where the number of people present is small and the layout means they should not require assistance to escape. Where the premises have an effective warning system or also may have some form of fire detection.

**A low risk** is where there is a minimal risk to people and where the risk of fire occurring is low, or the potential for fire, heat and smoke spreading is negligible.

### Length of Escape Routes

#### With only a single route:

Normal fire risk	18 metres
Low fire risk	25 metres

#### With seating in rows

Normal fire risk	15 metres
Low fire risk	18 metres

#### With more than one route:

Normal fire risk	45 metres
Low fire risk	60 metres

#### With seating in rows

Normal fire risk	32 metres
Low fire risk	45 metres

Where the route leading to a storey exit starts in a corridor with a dead end, and then continues via a route which has an alternative, then the total distance should not exceed that given for more than one route. However the distances within the dead end portion should not exceed that given for a single route.

The travel distances are flexible and may be increased or decreased depending upon the level of risk after you have put in place the appropriate fire-prevention measures.

People with disabilities may need special arrangements.

Normal risk escape time guideline to a place of safety is 2.5 minutes.

Low risk escape time is 3 minutes.

### Number and Width of Exits

There should be enough available exits of adequate width from every room, storey or building. They can be assessed as follows;

- an exit route of not less than 750mm can accommodate up to 40 persons per minute
- and one that is 1050mm wide up to 80 persons

For wider exits then the width should be increased by 75mm for each 15 persons that can be safely accommodated.

### **Seating and gangways**

The type of seating arrangements adopted will vary with the use to which the premises are put. Premises should only be used for closely seated audiences if your risk assessment shows that it is safe to do so.

When premises are licensed there may be additional conditions in the licence concerning how the seating may be set out. Seating and gangways in a hall or assembly place should be so arranged to allow free and ready access direct to the exits. Audiences seated in rows will first have to make their way to the end of the row before being able to use the escape routes provided.

In fixed seats there should be a clear space of at least 305mm between the back of one seat to the front of the seat behind it. Gangways should be adequate for the number of seats served and at least 1050mm wide. There should be no projections that reduce this width.

In general, no seat should be more than 7 seats away from a gangway. Standing and sitting in gangways, or in front of any exit, should not be permitted.

### **The number of escape routes and exits**

In general there should normally be at least two escape routes from all parts of the premises but in some small premises a single escape route may be acceptable e.g. a building or part of a building accommodating less than 60 persons or where the travel distances are limited.

Where two escape routes are necessary and to further minimize the risk to people becoming trapped, you should ensure that the escape routes are completely independent of each other.

When evaluating escape routes, you may need to build in a safety factor by discounting the largest exit from your escape plan, then determine whether the remaining escape routes from a room, floor or building will be sufficient to evacuate all the occupants within a reasonable time. Escape routes from the premises that consist of a single direction only, known as a dead-end condition, may need additional fire precautions to be able to be regarded as adequate.

Exit doors on escape routes should normally open in the direction of travel, especially so if more than 60 people use them, and be easily and quickly opened

without the need for a key. Checks should be made to ensure final exits are wide enough to accommodate the number of people who may use the escape routes they serve.

Escape routes and exits should be available for use and kept clear of obstruction at all times.

You must take into account **all** the occupants in the premises and especially those who may need assistance to escape.

In most premises the evacuation will simply be by means of everyone reacting to the warning signal given when a fire is discovered and making their way to a place of safety.

In some cases, due to the number of public present, if no fire alarm has been sounded then an immediate request to leave the premises may be an initial safer evacuation procedure once the person responsible has been made aware of a fire from another person.

Escape routes should mean that people move away from a fire and always lead to a place of safety.

### **Inner Rooms**

Inner rooms should be provided with a vision panel to the access room or provided with a Smoke Alarm in the access room provided it can be heard in the inner room. They should not be used for sleeping accommodation. No more than 60 persons should occupy an inner room.

### **Corridors**

Corridors should normally be about 1 metre wide although wheelchair users will need a width of 1.2 metres. If a corridor leads in only one direction then it may need to be constructed of fire resisting materials with self-closing doors.

If they are more than 30m long then generally corridors should be sub-divided with fire doors and, where necessary, fire-resisting construction to limit the spread of fire and smoke and to protect escape exit routes if there is a fire.

Doors that are provided solely for the purpose of restricting the travel of smoke need not be fire doors, but will be suitable as long as they are of substantial construction, are capable of resisting the passage of smoke, and are self-closing. Smoke should not be able to bypass these doors, e.g. above a false ceiling or via alternative doors from a room, or adjoining rooms, opening either side of the subdivision.

Toilet doors are not normally required to be of fire-resisting construction.

### **Stairways**

A stairway should be wide enough for those persons likely to use it and normally not less than 1 metre.

Where more than one stair is provided you should assume that the widest one may be unusable as a result of a fire. This means the remaining stair or stairs must be sufficient for everyone present and provide a satisfactory escape route.

Stairways should normally be protected by fire resisting partitions and fire resisting self-closing doors, (except toilet doors) and lead directly to a way out of the building.

An unprotected stairway may be suitable in some places provided the stair links no more than two floors, it is additional to that required for escape purposes, and no escape from a dead end situation passes access to such a stairway.

People should not have to pass through a protected stair to reach an alternative stair. If necessary the stairway must have arrangements to be by-passed, for instance, using doors connecting adjacent rooms.

Unprotected stairs including a single stair may be suitable as a means of escape provided that;

- the stair provides access between ground and first floor or ground and basement only, and an exit can be reached from any part of those floors within the escape times for single routes; and
- access to the stair is clearly visible for any part of the floor it serves and it exits not more than 6 metres from a storey exit leading direct to open air.

Where an external stairway is provided, any door or window (other than toilet windows) opening onto the stairway or within 1.8m horizontally or 9m vertically of it, should be fire resisting, windows unopenable and doors self-closing.

Consider protecting the external stairway from the weather as the treads may become slippery, e.g. due to algae, moss or ice. If this is not possible, you must ensure that the stairway is regularly maintained. Consider fixing non-slip material to the treads.

### **Accommodation Stairways**

The premises may have stairs not needed as part of the means of escape. These are known as accommodation stairways. They may not require fire separation from the remainder of the floor as long as they do not pass through a compartment floor, or people do not have to pass the head of such a stairway in order to access a means of escape stairway.

### **Facilities for Means of Escape**

The following are not normally accepted as means of escape for members of the public as they are not conventional escape routes;

- revolving doors, unless specifically designed for escape purposes;
- portable, foldaway, vertical raking, or throw out ladders;
- window exits;
- wall and floor hatches, wicket doors and gates; and
- rolling shutters and folding, sliding or up and over doors

### **The age and construction of the premises**

The materials used for construction and quality of building can contribute to the speed of fire spread and potentially affect the escape routes.

### **Reducing the Spread of Fire, Heat and Smoke**

It may be necessary to protect the escape routes against fire and smoke by upgrading the construction of the floors, walls and ceilings to a fire-resisting standard. You may need to seek further professional advice. Any structural alterations may require Building Regulation approval.

Any holes in fire-resisting floors or walls, e.g. pipework openings, should be filled with fire-resisting materials to prevent spread of fire, heat and smoke.

Large areas of combustible wall or ceiling linings should be covered, treated or removed to reduce the possibility of rapid spread of fire.

Such linings must not be used in escape routes.

### **Assessing the Means of Escape**

Because of the wide variation of church premises it is only possible to give a general guide to the level of fire precautions required to satisfy the Fire Safety Order. If the premises are very large or unusual then further specialist guidance should be sought.

### **Defining an Escape Route**

The contents of rooms should be so arranged to ensure a clear passageway to all escape routes.

### **Items Prohibited On Escape Routes**

Items, which could pose a potential fire hazard or an obstruction, should not be permitted on escape routes. They can include the following;

- portable heaters of any type especially with naked flames or radiant bars;
- fixed heaters with a gas supply cylinder where the cylinder is in the escape route;
- oil-fuelled heaters or boilers, cooking appliances;

- upholstered furniture, coat racks;
- temporarily stored items in transit, waste bins;
- lighting using naked flames; and
- electrical equipment e.g. photocopiers

### Exhibitions and Displays

Any exhibition or display with large amounts of flammable materials can allow fire to spread rapidly.

These should be avoided wherever possible or alternative special arrangements made to reduce risks where necessary.

Notice boards should be kept as small as possible and securely fixed in position, not sited above heaters, or contain excessive amounts of paper.

Escape routes should be well managed and maintained to ensure that they remain usable and available at all times when the premises are occupied.

### Escape Doors

Doors people have to pass through in order to escape should open in the direction of travel where;

- more than 60 persons may have to use the door;
- the door is at or near the foot of a stair; and
- the door is on an exit route from a building used for public assembly.

### Final Exit Doors

You should make sure that persons using an escape route can open any door easily and immediately without the use of a key. Outward opening doors, that have to be kept fastened while people are in the building, should be fitted with some form of panic latch, panic bolt, or a push pad to BS EN 1125.

There should be a notice displaying the method of operation in letters of at least 100 mm, white on a green background.

The final exit door should not lead to an enclosed area from which there is no further escape.

The final exit door should lead to a place of safety.

### Fire Doors

Where fire doors are fitted they should be provided with effective self-closing devices and labelled "**Fire Door- Keep Shut**".

Fire doors to cupboards and stores need not be self-closing provided they are kept locked and labelled "**Fire Door-Keep Locked Shut**". Signs should be in accordance with BS5499.

Self-closing doors may be held open by automatic door release mechanisms, which are either;

- connected to a manually operated fire alarm with automatic smoke detectors in the vicinity of the door; or
- actuated by independent smoke detectors (not domestic smoke alarms) on each side of the door.

Where such mechanisms are provided they should be able to be released manually and the doors should be automatically closed by;

- the actuation of a smoke-sensitive device on either side of the door;
- a power failure to the door release mechanism or smoke-sensitive devices; or
- the actuation of a fire warning system linked to the door release mechanisms or a system failure.
- Such fire doors should be labeled: "**Automatic Fire Door -Keep Clear**"

Where possible automatic fire doors should be closed at night.

### Lighting of Escape Routes

All escape routes, including external ones, are likely to require sufficient emergency lighting for people to find their way to a place of safety.

Emergency Lighting will be necessary if the premises are used into the hours of darkness. It needs to function on a failure of the normal lighting system.

In small premises, in which the escape routes are simple and straightforward, borrowed lighting, e.g. from street lamps where they illuminate escape routes, may be acceptable.

When borrowed lighting is not suitable, then a number of torches, in strategic positions, can be considered, but this system will need to be well managed to ensure they remain available and working. Torches on a mains recharging system will be preferable.

Single 'stand-alone' emergency lighting units may be sufficient in small premises and these can be sometimes combined with exit or directional signs.

In larger premises it is likely that a more comprehensive system of automatic lighting will be needed to illuminate all the escape routes,

### Emergency lighting should

- indicate the escape routes clearly;

- provide illumination along escape routes to final exits, ensuring fire alarm points and fire fighting equipment can be located; and
- provide illumination to other areas where persons need to be able to move safely to escape routes.

Emergency lighting units normally should be sited to cover;

- intersections of corridors, at each exit door, and outside each final exit and on external routes;
- staircases so that each flight receives direct light;
- changes in floor levels;
- windowless rooms and toilets exceeding 8m<sup>2</sup>;
- fire fighting equipment and fire alarm points;

Lighting units should be placed as low as possible but at least 2m above floor level and be installed to BS 5266 Part 1.

The use of photo-luminescent material for exit signs can supplement the emergency lighting and can be used for final exit doors instead of illuminated signs.

Emergency lighting can be both 'maintained' i.e. on all the time, or 'non-maintained', which only operates when the normal lighting fails.

Units are available with durations from one to three hours. The duration should be 3 hours for sleeping accommodation and 2 hours in all other premises. In premises not having more than two floors above ground, a minimum of one hour duration may be acceptable.

## Signs and Notices

Signs must be used, where necessary, to help people identify emergency escape routes. ALL exits should be indicated in accordance with the relevant requirements of the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996. Signs must incorporate a pictogram of a man running in or to a doorway depending whether you use BS 5499, or EU Directive 92/58/ EEC. Either type can be used but different types should not be mixed. The sign may, where necessary, incorporate a directional arrow and can also be supplemented by words.

In small and simple premises, a single sign indicating the alternative exit might be all that is needed. In larger premises a series of signs directing people along the escape routes towards the final exit might be needed.

A risk assessment that determines no escape signs are required, as stewards will always be available to

help the occupants to escape routes, is unlikely to be acceptable to the enforcing authority.

Escape signs should provide clear, unambiguous instruction with enough information to enable people to safely leave a building in an emergency.

Escape signs should not be fixed to doors but mounted above at a height of between 2m and 2.5m above the floor.

## Other Signs and Notices

A number of other signs such as 'Fire Door Keep Shut' may be also necessary. Signs should indicate the location of fire fighting equipment if there is any doubt about its location, e.g. extinguishers kept in a cupboard.

Where the locations of escape routes and fire-fighting equipment are readily apparent and the fire-fighting equipment is visible at all times, then signs are not necessary

A '**Push Bar to Open**' notice should be displayed on all doors fitted with a panic bolt or panic latch.

Fire Action notices should be displayed at all final exit doors, in order that occupants can be informed of what do to in the event of an emergency.

## Maintenance and Testing of Fire Precautions and Equipment

All equipment provided in the premises for the safety of the public should be regularly checked and maintained by a competent person in accordance with any relevant standards and manufacturers recommendations.

### Such equipment includes;

- Fire detection and warning systems;
- Fire extinguishers; and
- Emergency lighting.

Depending upon the equipment the various checks needed can be weekly, monthly or annually. Exact details of what is needed can be obtained from the various manufacturers and installers. Also needing regular checks will be means of escape routes, including floor coverings to prevent tripping, fire doors and self-closing devices.

## Daily Checks

Check escape routes to ensure they are clear from obstructions and combustible materials. Ensure doors on escape routes open and close fully. Where practical, visually check emergency lighting apparently working, fire alarm is active, and safety signs and notices are in place and legible.

## Weekly Tests

Test fire detection and warning systems and manually operated devices. Check safety torch batteries and that extinguishers are correctly located and apparently in working order by checking any seals are in place.

## Monthly Tests

Test all emergency lighting systems and torches.

## Six-monthly Tests

A competent person should test and maintain the fire detection and warning systems. Do self-closing doors work properly?

## Annual Tests

The emergency lighting, fire alarm system and all extinguishers should be tested and maintained.

## STEP 4 Record, Plan, Instruct, Inform, and Train

If you employ five or more employees you must record the significant findings of your risk assessment and the actions you have taken.

This record might take the form of a simple list, or you could use a plan of the layout of the premises, or a combination of both of these.

You must be able to satisfy the enforcing authority, if called upon to do so, that you have carried out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment. You do not need to record all the details, only those that are significant and the action taken.

In church premises, even if there are no employees, a record should be kept to satisfy the above.

The use of a plan of the premises can show the positions of fire equipment and existing fire precautions, such as fire doors, fire alarm points, emergency lighting, main electrical supply switches, gas shut-off valves, and highlight any areas that need to be addressed.

### You should record the following;

Date of assessment;  
Hazards identified;  
Persons you identify as being at particular risk. and  
What action needs to be taken by whom and when.

## Emergency Plans

The purpose of the emergency plan is to ensure that the people in the premises should be able to know what to do in the event of a fire and to ensure that the premises can be safely evacuated to a location where persons will not be in danger.

In small premises the emergency plan may be no more than a fire action notice.

In larger premises these action notices should be prominently posted in key locations throughout the premises such as fire alarm call points, fire fighting equipment or general notice boards.

### The plan should include clear instructions on:

- the action to be taken on discovery of a fire;
- how people will be warned if there is a fire;
- how any evacuation will be carried out;
- where people should assemble and the procedure for checking the building has been evacuated;
- identification of escape routes and the methods of using them;
- the fire fighting equipment provided;
- duties of employees and stewards responsible for the various groups;
- arrangements for safe evacuation of people at risk, including disabled and children;
- the method of calling the fire brigade and other emergency services;
- the procedure for liaising with the fire brigade; and
- what training stewards and others need

## Inform, Instruct and Co-ordinate

You must give comprehensive and relevant information and appropriate instructions to Church stewards and the employers of other people working in your premises, such as contractors, about how to prevent fires and what they should do if there is a fire.

Where appropriate Fire Action Notices and instructions may need to be translated into other languages.

Information should be given as soon as possible after stewards are appointed and regularly after that. Make sure you include all cleaners and persons who may work outside normal hours.

Information should be made available to the public i.e. Fire Action notices.

The information and instruction should include the findings of the risk assessment, measures put in place, what action to take, identity of persons who have been nominated for fire safety and any special arrangements for persons at risk.

## Fire Safety Training

You must provide adequate fire safety training for Church stewards and other officials.

In small premises the procedures may be relatively simple, but in larger, more complex premises they will need to be more comprehensive. In all cases the type of training should take into account

- the findings of the risk assessment
- explain your emergency procedures
- explain duties of stewards and officials
- be easily understandable by all who may be present
- be tested by fire drills

Training should be repeated as necessary at least once a year and when employees or officials change, i.e. new stewards being appointed.

Fire drills are an effective way of confirming that the emergency plan is effective.

It would be prudent to hold these occasionally, perhaps by asking congregations to leave by emergency or alternative exits following the main service of the day, twice per annum.

For premises with more than one escape route, the escape plan should be designed to evacuate all people on the assumption that one exit or stair is unavailable because of a fire. Different scenarios should be used for different drills.

It may not be beneficial to have surprise drills as the health and safety risks introduced may outweigh the benefits.

Once a roll call, or a check to account for everybody, is complete, people should be allowed to return to the building.

Throughout the drill the responsible person should observe any potential difficulties with the procedures and make suitable amendments to the evacuation procedures.

**All users of the premises should receive a copy of the Emergency Plan and be encouraged to ensure their group members are aware of the evacuation plan details.**

## Stage 5 Review

The fire risk assessment is not a one-off procedure. It should be continually monitored to ensure the existing safety arrangements and risk assessments remain realistic.

It should be reviewed if there are significant changes in the occupancy, working practices, a change in the

storage situation or when building works are proposed, or when it is no longer thought to be valid.

If a fire or 'near miss' occurs, this could indicate that your assessment may be inadequate and you should carry out a re-assessment. It is good practice to identify the cause of the incident and revise the assessment in the light of this.

## Other Practical Measures and information

### Housekeeping and Hazards

Do not store anything in escape routes, even temporarily, which could cause an obstruction and hinder safe escape from the premises.

Ensure there are no flammable materials, including rubbish and waste, left in escape routes as they could give support to the spread of fire.

Wax Polish - cleaning rags impregnated with polish can ignite spontaneously. They should be kept in lidded containers.

Some plastic materials especially in the form of foam rubber are easily ignitable, producing highly toxic fumes. Hassocks or kneelers with damaged covers should be repaired so as to avoid the plastic being exposed.

Care should be taken with the burning of incense and candles. It should be ensured that the charcoal and thuribles are cooled after use and before they are returned to store. An effective candlesnuffer should be used to extinguish candles.

It is necessary to ensure that matches, candles, votives, lighters, and petrol motor mowers are securely stored to prevent unauthorised access.

Chimneys and flues should be kept in good repair. Chimneys should be swept at least once a year and more often if wood is burned.

Camping equipment must not be stored on or close to heating pipes.

Flammable decorations should not be fixed where, should the fixing fail, they would fall on to a source of ignition.

Lightning protection equipment should be tested every five years. The earthing strips should be regularly checked for damage. New installations should be installed in accordance with BS 6651.

Contractors undertaking 'hot work' on roofs should sign a permit undertaking to have extinguishers on hand during the work, to remove combustible material following the work and to inspect the area thoroughly for 30mins following completion of the work to ensure there is no outbreak of fire.

In all areas where smoking is permitted metal ashtrays should be provided. They should be regularly emptied into a metal receptacle and disposed in a safe place outside the premises.

## The Risk of Arson

Having good security and ensuring that any flammable materials stored outside the building do not put the premises at risk can reduce the risk of arson.

Precautions to be taken against include:

- Ensure a high standard of vigilance at all times.
- All external doors and windows should be securely locked with key operated locks when the premises are unoccupied.
- A five lever mortise lock (BS 3621) should be fitted to the final exit door.
- Where possible, an imperforate metal receptacle should be fixed behind the letter flaps so as to contain any burning materials pushed through the flap.
- Ensure the outside of the premises is well lit and, if practical, secure the perimeter of the premises.

## Fire Safety Checks

Whilst it is essential to protect the occupants from fire whilst the premises are occupied, many of the recommendations will also protect the building whilst it is unoccupied.

This can be done by carrying out a safety check before it is vacated and this procedure should be the responsibility of all user groups as well as church members who are last to leave the building.

### The checks should include:

- all windows and doors are closed, including any doors held open by automatic release devices;
- electrical equipment and lighting not in use is switched off, and where appropriate unplugged;
- smoking materials are not left smoldering and any naked flames are extinguished;
- flammable rubbish is removed to a safe place; and
- the premises are secured against unauthorised entry.

## Disabled People

Legislation dealing with the needs of disabled people does not make any specific requirements regarding means of escape in case of fire. However, the Disability Discrimination Act requires 'reasonable adjustments' to be made to premises to ensure mobility impaired persons are not put at a disadvantage. This includes ensuring that disabled people can leave the premises safely in the event of fire.

Whilst the majority of disabled people wish to and are able to escape by themselves, there may be a number who are only able to move or react adequately with assistance. Your emergency plan should therefore take account of disabled people when planning the fire safety arrangements and evacuation procedures.

## Lifts

Should not be used as a means of escape. However where lifts are specifically designed for evacuation of disabled persons as in BS 5588: Part 8 they must be under control of the management with an agreed procedure, which enables the switching to be controlled from the car itself, so an operator can take it to the required floor to evacuate disabled persons.

## Refuges

Because of the limits on travel distances, most disabled persons should be able to reach the safety of a protected escape route or final exit independently. However, some disabled people, for example those who rely on a wheelchair, will not be able to use stairs without assistance. For these people it may be necessary to provide refuges on all storeys other than those in small buildings of limited height.

A refuge is a place of reasonable safety in which disabled people can wait either for an evacuation lift or for assistance up or down stairs. They should be enclosed in fire-resisting material or other elements and could be a lobby, corridor or part of a public area or stairway.

Disabled people should not be left alone in a refuge and your evacuation policy should not rely on the fire and rescue services rescuing people waiting in these refuges.

A competent person can consider normal lifts suitable for fire evacuation purposes subject to a risk assessment strategy.

Since evacuation lifts can fail, a disabled person, having reached a refuge, should be able to gain access to a stairway, should conditions become untenable. Therefore an evacuation lift with its refuge should be located adjacent to a protected stairway.

The age of the likely occupants will need to be considered in any means of escape facilities although it is a mistake to equate old age with physical disability. Stewards need to be vigilant in an emergency so help can be given where needed, including the young and elderly.

In formulating an evacuation plan, consideration should be given as to how wheelchair users and others with impaired mobility can be assisted.

- Enough able-bodied persons need to be available if necessary to carry people and they will need to be trained in the correct methods of doing so.
- People with impaired vision should also be considered as part of the evacuation plan.
- Assistance should be offered to guide dog owners, with the owner retaining control of the dog.
- Persons with impaired hearing may also need to be assisted, ensuring they can hear and understand any alarm.
- Persons with mental or learning difficulties may need to be told what to do in the event of a fire. They will need assistance and reassurance.

### **Historic and Listed Buildings**

Fire in historic buildings not only carry a risk of loss of life but can also mean the loss of irreplaceable parts of our heritage.

Because of this any proposed changes, including fire precautions, must be carefully considered to ensure a balance is struck between sufficient fire safety measures for the safety of people, yet avoid extensive alterations and helping to maintain the character of the building.

The provision of new or altered fire doors to increase their fire resistance must be referred to the relevant Control Authority, e.g. under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Order 1994.

A fire safety engineering approach that takes the total fire safety package into account can provide a more fundamental and economic solution than more prescriptive approaches to fire safety.

### **Occasional use of church premises for sleeping purposes**

The following precautions should be taken if your premises are used for conferences, seminars, youth weekends, etc. where sleeping accommodation is provided.

- There should be at least two routes leading from the sleeping accommodation and out of the building. A room with two exit doors leading into the same corridor from whence there is only one exit which could be impeded with smoke and fire could not be considered acceptable.
- External doors should be left unlocked when the premises are occupied unless they are fitted with panic latches or similar equipment. If, for security purposes, this is impractical, the only fastening should be a simple tower bolt type. Exit doors should be regularly checked for ease of opening.
- Exit routes and doors should be clearly indicated.
- In order to minimize the spread of fire and smoke should an outbreak occur, all doors and serving hatches should be closed, particularly during sleeping hours.
- An outbreak of fire often causes a power failure. It is therefore necessary for supervisory staff to be provided with hand lamps unless the premises are equipped with a system of emergency lighting.
- Smoking should be prohibited in sleeping accommodation.
- A nominal roll of occupants should be prepared and hung just within the main door. Occupants should be instructed to report to a predetermined assembly point in the event of a fire and a roll call taken.
- Anyone discovering an outbreak of fire should raise the alarm by shouting 'Fire' and, if the premises are equipped with a fire alarm system, the nearest fire alarm point should be operated.
- Supervisory staff should be aware of the location of the nearest exchange telephone. They should also check it is in working order. The Fire Service should be called to all outbreaks of fire by using the 999 facility.
- Cars should not be parked where they would obstruct exit routes or access for appliances.

### **Third Party Use of the Premises**

Many church premises hire out parts of their buildings on a regular or occasional basis to a third party, e.g. Pre-schools, dance groups etc. The Fire Safety Order places responsibility for the safe conduct of their activities on the person responsible for the hire. They must co-operate with the Church 'Responsible Person' to ensure all fire precautions are maintained.

They will have to carry out a risk assessment for the areas of the premises they use and such conditions as necessary should be agreed as part of the hire agreement.

If the Church premises are let to a Third Party such as a charity or other independent user, that user must appoint their own 'Responsible Person' and liaise with the church on fire safety measures.

It follows that the same provisions apply to activities of the church or church groups meeting on other premises for which the Managing Trustees are not directly responsible.

## Ministers and Church Housing

The Order does not apply to single domestic premises. Meetings held in such places would appear not to be classed as a 'Place of Assembly'.

If housing is directly attached to a church then it should be covered as part of the risk assessment of the whole premises

## Enforcement of the Regulations

In most premises, the local Fire Authority enforces the Fire Safety Order and has the power to inspect your premises to check that you are complying with your duties under the Fire Safety Order.

They will look for evidence that you have carried out a suitable risk assessment and acted upon the significant findings.

If the fire authority is dissatisfied with the outcome of your risk assessment or the action you have taken, they can serve an Enforcement Notice requiring you to make certain improvements or, in extreme cases, a Prohibition Notice that restricts the use of all or part of your premises until improvements have been made.

If your premises are considered by the enforcing authority to be of high risk, they may issue an Alterations Notice that requires you to inform them before you make any material alteration to your premises.

Failure to comply with any duty imposed by the Order or any Notice issued by the enforcing authority is an offence. You have the right of appeal to a Magistrates Court within 21 days against any Notice issued.

Where you agree that there is a need for improvements to your fire precautions but disagree with the enforcing authority on the technical solution to be used (e.g. what type of alarm system is needed) you may refer this to an independent determination.

If an appeal is lodged the notice will be held in abeyance until the court has heard the appeal and either upheld the notice, cancelled it or amended it.

In any proceedings for such an offence, it is a defence for people charged to prove that they took all reasonable precautions and exercised all due diligence to avoid the commission of the offence.

In any proceedings for an offence under this Order consisting of a failure to comply with a duty or requirement so far as is reasonably practical, it is for the accused to prove that it was not reasonably practicable to do more than was done to satisfy the duty or requirement.

Any person found guilty by a court of either failing to comply with the terms of an Enforcement Notice, or of placing people at serious risk by failing to comply with the Fire Safety Order may be sentenced;

- on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum; or
- on indictment, to a fine, or up to two years imprisonment, or both.

In view of the above, it is strongly advised that records are kept of ALL inspections, tests and training to provide proof of taking reasonable precautions.

## Further Advice and Information

If further advice or information is required the Local Fire Service may be able to assist.

Reference to the Guides, as listed below, will also provide further detailed information for all the various Steps of the Risk Assessment.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has published 11 Guides for different types of premises, which are available for £12 each from

**DCLG Publications, PO Box 236, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7NB, Tel 0870 830 7099  
E-mail: [communities@twoten.com](mailto:communities@twoten.com)**

The website for information is [www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk](http://www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk)

They can also be downloaded free of charge but be aware they are more than 150 pages for each guide.

There is also a **Short Guide**, free of charge, from the same address, which gives a basic outline of the requirements of the Fire Safety Order. They will send as many copies of this short guide as you wish for use in each of your churches in your area.

**Guide No 6** applies to buildings with a total capacity of less than 300 persons and Guide No 7 applies to

buildings with more than 300 persons in church premises.

For all outdoor activities **Guide No 9 'Open air events'** will also be applicable.

There are church premises that also have offices, shops and similar types of use either part of or attached to the main building and in some cases as a separate building. The overall risk assessment carried out in the main church building should include these areas and identify any specific hazards. If necessary, reference can be made to **Guide No 1, Offices and shops**, if additional information is required.

Church properties can also include areas such as hostels, common areas of flats and places where staff could be sleeping. Any additional information specific for these areas can be found in **Guide No 3, Sleeping accommodation**.

An example record of significant findings of a Risk Assessment can be found in all the guides under Part 2, Section 7.

Appendix A of the Guides gives an example under A1, of a Fire Safety Maintenance Checklist, and under A2 an Example form for recording significant findings.

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Some of the contents of this guidance document are also based on the advice published in the above Guides Nos. 6 and 7 and where applicable is acknowledged as Crown Copyright.

In Scotland the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 Part 3 has similar regulations and details of these can be found on the Internet website:-

[www.infoscotland.com/firelaw](http://www.infoscotland.com/firelaw)

There is a Fire Safety Guidance Booklet, which can be obtained for free by opening the Home page then click on General Guidance to download, or it can also be obtained from;

**Blackwell's Bookshop, 0131 622 8283**  
[business.Edinburgh@blackwells.co.uk](mailto:business.Edinburgh@blackwells.co.uk)

A series of detailed guidance documents is currently being produced for various types of premises in Scotland, but there will not be a specific guide for churches.


### **Definitions used in this Guide**

For a definition of some of the technical terms used in this Guide, reference should be made to the Glossary, Appendix D, to be found in all the above Guides Nos. 1, 3, 6, 7, and 9.


# FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT AUDIT CHECK LIST

## HAZARDS AND RISKS


### Sources of ignition




Sources of fuel




Electrical appliances  
Wiring, plugs, switches  
Extension leads, too long, left coiled  
Left unattended/switched on  
Correct fusing  
Electrical main switch equipment—accessible—indicated




Cooking facilities  
Gas cylinders, outside secure storage  
Gas isolation valve location—accessible at all times—indicated




Smoking policy  
Designated smoking areas checked, ashtrays emptied




Heaters  
Portable-needed?  
Tubular fixed under seat—warning notices/guards




Adequate ventilation  
Condition  
Boiler rooms—not used as storage areas—locked, no unauthorised access




Lighting protection




Arson  
Security-doors, windows  
Storage of skips/bins—adjacent to walls/under windows/eaves  
Security lighting  
Boundary fencing  
Security CCTV and recording systems  
Letterbox security—internal metal box to contain any burning material pushed through




Combustible materials  
Decorating materials—paint-thinners




Storage  
Furniture fire retardant/modified foam  
Removal of surplus




Storage of fuel for garden maintenance—location—amount



Decorations—Christmas trees



Camping equipment storage



Candles and Incense

## THE REGULATORY REFORM (FIRE SAFETY) ORDER 2005 FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

**Premises Name**

**Address**

**No of Persons**

**Type of Premises**

**Assessment Carried out-  
Date**

**Assessment Carried out by**

<b>Assessment Agreed and Discussed with Responsible Person</b>	<b>Date</b>
<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>

**Position held**

**Signature on behalf of Managing Trustees/Responsible Person**

**Assessment Review Date**

Date		By Whom	<b>signed</b>
Date		By Whom	<b>Signed</b>
Date		By Whom	<b>Signed</b>
Date		By Whom	<b>Signed</b>
Date		By Whom	<b>Signed</b>

## Existing Fire Precautions Summary Check List

	tick	Comments
<b>1 Means of Escape</b>		
a. Adequate number of exits and escape routes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Provision for disabled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. Exits not locked, key operated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
d. Obstructions, consumables in escape routes (corridors/stairs) fire or trip hazard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
e. Fire doors, wedges, smoke seals, direction of opening, state of repair and close fitting, self closers working.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
f. Escape routes, protection by fire doors, smoke stopping, fire walls, under drawing of stairs, wall linings restricting surface spread of flame, lead to a place of safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
g. Travel distances to a place of safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
h. Fire separation between floors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
i. Services cables, pipes, ducts etc. Fire stopped between storeys, high risk rooms, escape routes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
j. Escape from inner rooms -early warning in access room, vision panel, smoke detector.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
k. Fire protection to external escape stairs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
l. Electronic locks, failsafe to fire alarm system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
m. Hold open devices -Fire Service approved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
n. Glazing, fire resisting, insulated on escape routes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
o. Electric meters in escape routes, enclosed in fire-resisting materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
p. Standard of fire resisting materials used, 20/30/60/120 minutes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
q. Can fire be adequately contained or compartmented.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
r. Location of assembly point(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>2. Signs &amp; Notices</b>		
a. Exit routes clearly signed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Fire doors correctly signed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. Signage, current standard, correct size.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
d. Method of opening fire exit doors clearly displayed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
e. Signage where fire safety equipment <b>not</b> clearly visible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
f. Other signs:-	<input type="checkbox"/>	
i, no smoking	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ii, fire action notices	<input type="checkbox"/>	
iii. warning signs	<input type="checkbox"/>	

tick    Comments

### 3. Fire Alarm System

- a. Suitability of existing system, verbal, manual, automatic sprinklers.
- b. Availability throughout premises.
- c. Condition of equipment.
- d. Staff familiar with use and sound.
- e. Correct type and siting of automatic detectors.
- f. Maintained regularly, weekly test and annual test,

### 4. Fire Fighting Equipment

- a. Adequate number, correctly located.
- b. Suitable for risk.
- c. Maintained regularly with annual service.
- d. Staff trained in their use.

### 5. Emergency Lighting

- a. Is structure occupied during the hours of darkness?
- b. Do existing lights adequately illuminate escape routes, escape signage.
- c. Fully functioning, bulbs working.
- d. Maintained regularly, monthly test, 6 monthly discharge, 3 yearly service.

### 6. Fire Brigade Access

- a. Width of gates, roadway.
- b. Parked vehicles.
- c. Locked doors to premises, keyholder availability.
- d. Access to risers, foam inlets.

### 7 Staff Training

- a. Instruct and train employees on the action to be taken in the case of fire.
- b. Records to be kept of training given.
- c. Training to cover:-
  - i. knowledge of raising the alarm
  - ii. escape routes
  - iii. assembly points(s)
  - iv. specific tasks -calling the Fire Brigade, securing premises, closing down Processes, cooking, or power supplies etc fire warden duties, checking specific areas, clear, roll call at assembly point tackling the fire if trained, meeting the Fire Brigade.

tick    Comments

**7 Staff Training cont/d**

- d What **not** to do in a fire,
  - i use lifts,
  - ii re-enter a building to collect personal belongings,
  - iii tackle fires if not trained,
  - iv open doors to rooms on fire.
- e Records to be kept of following:-
  - i. testing of fire alarm
  - ii. testing of emergency lighting
  - iii. testing of fire fighting equipment
  - iv. maintenance of the above
- f. Written fire and evacuation procedures to cover for employees, visitors, public, customers, contractors and disabled.

**8. General House Keeping**

**Good/Average/Poor**



## Example fire safety maintenance checklist

A fire safety maintenance checklist can be used as a means of supporting your fire safety policy. This list is not intended to be comprehensive and should not be used as a substitute for carrying out a fire risk assessment.

You can modify the example, where necessary, to fit your premises and may need to incorporate the recommendations of manufacturers and

installers of the fire safety equipment/systems that you may have installed in your premises.

Any ticks in the grey boxes should result in further investigation and appropriate action as necessary. In larger and more complex premises you may need to seek the assistance of a competent person to carry out some of the checks.

	YES	NO	N/A	Comments
<b>Daily checks (not normally recorded)</b>				
<b>Escape routes</b>				
Can all fire exits be opened immediately and easily?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are fire doors clear of obstructions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are escape route clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Fire warning systems</b>				
Is the indicator panel showing normal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are whistles, gongs or air horns in place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Escape lighting</b>				
Are luminaires and exit signs in good condition and undamaged?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is emergency lighting and sign lighting working correctly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Firefighting equipment</b>				
Are all fire extinguishers in place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are fire extinguishers clearly visible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are vehicles blocking fire hydrants or access to them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Weekly checks</b>				
<b>Escape routes</b>				
Do all emergency fastening devices to fire exits (push bars and pads, etc.) work correctly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are external routes clear and safe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Fire warning systems</b>				
Does testing a manual call point send a signal to the indicator panel? (Disconnect the link to the receiving centre or tell them you are doing a test.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Did the alarm system work correctly when tested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Did staff and other people hear the fire alarm?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Did any linked fire protection systems operate correctly? (e.g. magnetic door holder released, smoke curtains drop)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do all visual alarms and/or vibrating alarms and pagers (as applicable) work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	YES	NO	N/A	Comments
<b>Weekly checks <i>continued</i></b>				
Do voice alarm systems work correctly? Was the message understood?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Escape lighting</b>				
Are charging indicators (if fitted) visible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Firefighting equipment</b>				
Is all equipment in good condition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Additional items from manufacturer's recommendations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Monthly checks**

<b>Escape routes</b>				
Do all electronic release mechanisms on escape doors work correctly? Do they 'fail safe' in the open position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do all automatic opening doors on escape routes 'fail safe' in the open position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are fire door seals and self-closing devices in good condition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do all roller shutters provided for re compartmentation work correctly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are external escape stairs safe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do all internal self-closing fire doors work correctly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Escape lighting</b>				
Do all luminaires and exit signs function correctly when tested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have all emergency generators been tested? (Normally run for one hour.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Firefighting equipment</b>				
Is the pressure in 'stored pressure' fire extinguishers correct?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Additional items from manufacturer's recommendations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Three-monthly checks**

<b>General</b>				
Are any emergency water tanks/ponds at their normal capacity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are vehicles blocking fire hydrants or access to them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Additional items from manufacturer's recommendations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Six-monthly checks**

<b>General</b>				
Has any firefighting or emergency evacuation lift been tested by a competent person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has any sprinkler system been tested by a competent person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have the release and closing mechanisms of any fire-resisting compartment doors and shutters been tested by a competent person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	YES	NO	N/A	Comments
<b>Six-monthly checks <i>continued</i></b>				
<b>Fire warning system</b>				
Has the system been checked by a competent person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Escape lighting</b>				
Do all luminaires operate on test for one third of their rated value?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Additional items from manufacturer's recommendations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Annual checks</b>				
<b>Escape routes</b>				
Do all self-closing fire doors fit correctly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is escape route compartmentation in good repair?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Escape lighting</b>				
Do all luminaires operate on test for their full rated duration?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the system been checked by a competent person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Firefighting equipment</b>				
Has all firefighting equipment been checked by a competent person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>				
Has any dry/wet rising fire main been tested by a competent person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the smoke and heat ventilation system been tested by a competent person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has external access for the fire service been checked for ongoing availability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have any firefighters' switches been tested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the fire hydrant bypass flow valve control been tested by a competent person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are any necessary fire engine direction signs in place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## A2 Example form for recording significant findings

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Risk Assessment — Record of significant findings		
Risk assessment for	Assessment undertaken by	
Company	Date	
Address	Completed by	Signature
Sheet number	Floor/area	Use
<b>Step 1 — Identify fire hazards</b>		
Sources of ignition	Sources of fuel	Sources of oxygen
<b>Step 2 — People at risk</b>		
<b>Step 3— Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk</b>		
(3.1) Evaluate the risk of the fire occurring (3.2) Evaluate the risk to people from a fire starting in the premises (3.3) Remove and reduce the hazards that may cause a fire (3.4) Remove and reduce the risks to people from a fire		
<b>Assessment review</b>		
Assessment review date	Completed by	Signature
Review outcome (where substantial changes have occurred a new record sheet should be used)		

**Notes**

- (1) The risk assessment record significant findings should refer to other plans, records or other documents as necessary.
- (2) The information in this record should assist you to develop an emergency plan; coordinate measures with other 'responsible persons' in the building; and to inform and train staff and inform other relevant persons.