

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 of the fire risk assessment are:

- To identify the fire hazards.
- To reduce the risk of those hazards causing harm to as low as reasonably practicable.
- To decide what physical fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary to ensure the safety of people in your premises if a fire does start.

The term 'where necessary' (see glossary) is used in the order, 1 therefore when deciding what fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary you will need to take account of this definition.

The terms 'hazard' and 'risk' are used throughout this guide and it is important that you have a clear understanding of how these should be used.

- **hazard:** anything that has the potential to cause harm.
- **risk:** the chance of that harm occurring.

If your organisation employs five or more people, or your premises are licensed or an alterations notice requiring it is in force, then the significant findings of the fire risk assessment, the actions to be taken as a result of the assessment and details of anyone especially at risk must be recorded. You will probably find it helpful to keep a record of the significant findings of your fire risk assessment even if you are not required to do so.

How do you 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 and can be carried out either as part of a more general risk assessment or as a separate exercise. As you move through the steps there are checklists to help you.

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

It is important that you carry out your fire risk assessment in a practical and systematic way and that you allocate enough time to do a proper job. It must take the whole of your premises into account, including outdoor locations and any rooms and areas that are rarely used. If your 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. Process areas (such as bakeries and cooking facilities in shops), offices, stores, as well as corridors, stairways and external routes.

If your premises are in a multi-use complex then the information on hazard and risk reduction will still be applicable to you. However, any alterations to the use or structure of your individual unit will need to take account of the overall fire safety arrangements in the building.

Your premises may be simple, with few people present or with a limited degree of business activity, but if it forms part of a building with different occupancies, then the measures provided by other occupiers may have a direct effect on the adequacy of the fire safety measures in your premises. You need to appoint one or more competent persons (this could be you) to carry out any of the preventive and protective measures needed to comply with the order. This person could be you, or an appropriately trained, employee or, where appropriate, a third party.

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

The figure below describes the steps to take in order to complete your fire risk assessment.

Landlords can take advantage of our online risk assessment tool. Additional guidance can be found under guidelines on the main menu. Business advice can be provided for you, locate your nearest fire safety department under where we cover.