



Fire safety

A guide for landlords – rented
and shared accommodation

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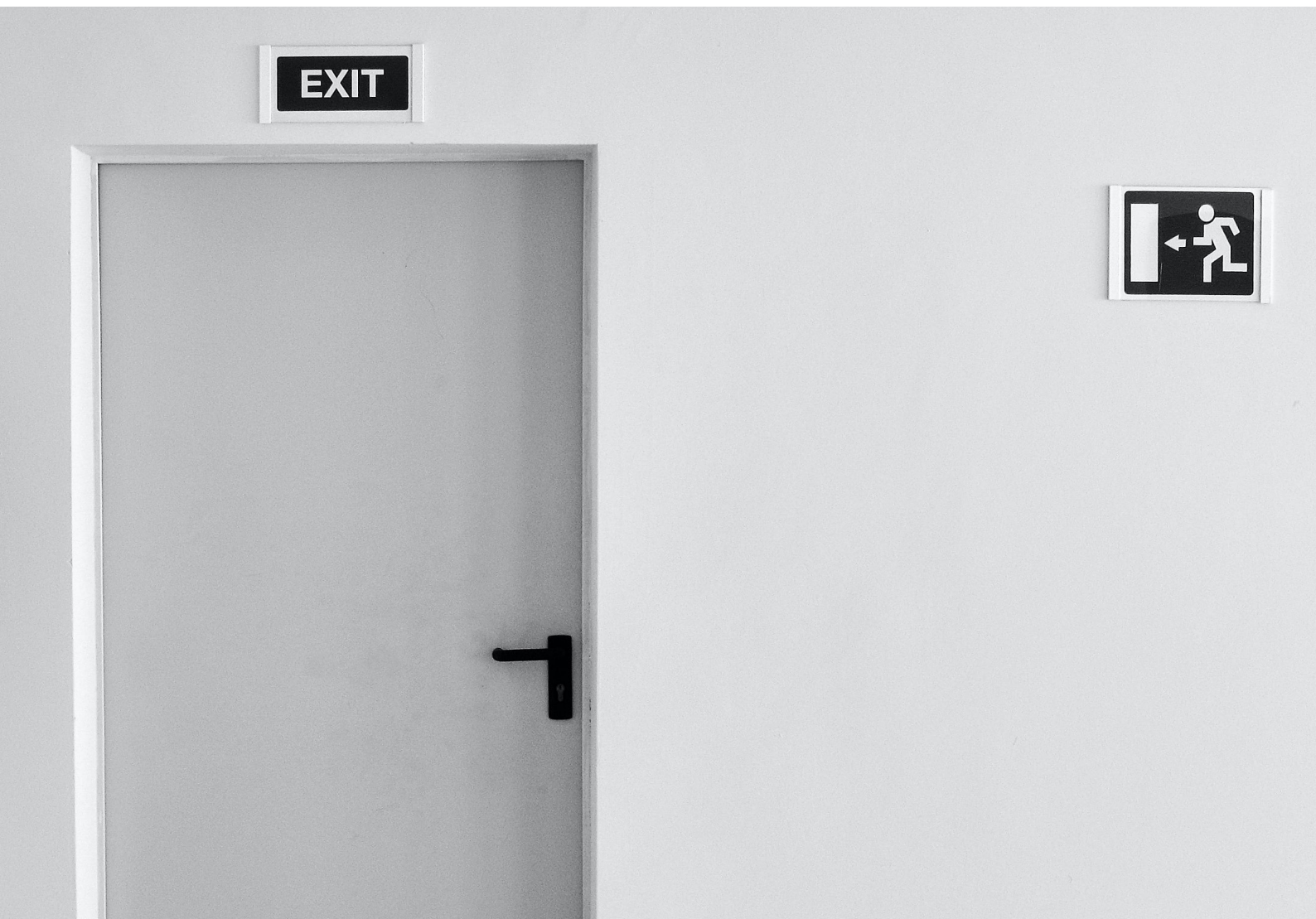
Introduction

To help keep a home safe from fire, a landlord must meet certain obligations under law.

The local authority can issue a remedial action notice and impose a fine of up to £5,000 if landlords and responsible persons fail to meet these obligations.

This guide offers advice to landlords and building managers about:

- what requirements they have for fire safety and
- other measures they can take to keep their tenants and their homes safe.



What is a responsible person?

If the landlord or building manager is designated as the 'responsible person' (RP) under the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#), they have a responsibility to make sure that residents are safe from fire.

According to [guidance](#) from the UK government, if you are a person with responsibility for the building under fire safety legislation, you must:

- 'carry out a fire risk assessment and document your findings
- ensure that adequate fire safety precautions are taken in the common parts
- maintain those fire safety precautions (keeping records of such maintenance is good practice)
- engage with residents to ensure that they are aware of what to do in the event of fire, and that they understand the fire safety measures within the building
- identify and co-operate with any other person who has duties under fire safety legislation to co-ordinate the fire safety measures for which each of you is responsible as well as provide relevant fire safety information to any subsequent person with responsibilities after you
- keep your fire risk assessment and fire safety precautions under regular review
- keep a record of your completed fire risk assessment (this should include the name of the person and/or authorised organisation that did this) and fire safety arrangements.'

The *Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005* requires additional provisions to ensure that fire safety is delivered and maintained.



What are fire risk assessments (FRAs)?

The principles of fire safety are there to ensure that the needs of building users, occupants and firefighters are assessed and managed. **This is to minimise the risk to life, not property.**

The main tool used to manage fire safety issues in residential buildings is a fire risk assessment (FRA).

FRAs are not mandatory on single dwellings, such as individual houses and bungalows. In all other cases, they are mandatory in England and Wales under the *Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005*. There are three main groups of assessments, depending on the use, building height and occupation.

Domestic – traditional houses, bungalows and flats

Landlords and building managers should be aware of the fire safety provisions in each home they are responsible for.

In flats, the same applies. However, there is an additional requirement for the block owner/landlord/manager to have a formal FRA on the common parts. This assessment should cover:

- fire doors
- corridors
- stairs/lifts
- main entrances
- external walls (including balconies) and
- flat entrance doors.



Domestic – flats in a higher-risk building (over 18m/7 storeys or more)

These properties, following the [changes introduced with the Building Safety Act 2022](#), have a specific regulatory regime to ensure higher standards. Alongside FRAs, building assessment certificates and site safety case assessments are required.

Commercial premises – shops, offices, factories, places of assembly, etc.

The government have provided a [range of guidance](#) that explains the principles and responsibilities of fire safety for commercial premises. These premises all require an FRA.



FRA and multiple occupancy properties

A formal fire risk assessment is required for all multi-occupancy properties. An RP must be appointed and identified as managing the risks in that building. If there are multiple parts to a building (e.g. flats above shops) there should be an FRA for each part and an additional one coordinating the assessment of the whole building. Each FRA should identify the RP.

Since 2022, there has been an additional role in **higher-risk buildings** (over 18m/7 storeys or more with at least two dwellings). These are also required to have identified **accountable persons** (APs). These must co-ordinate both fire safety and structural safety matters to the satisfaction of the Building Safety Regulator.

A 'site safety case' type of risk assessment is required on each building. If the AP is responsible only for individual parts of a building, a principal accountable person (PAP) must be appointed to oversee and manage the overall responsibility. These roles are in addition to the RP's requirements above.

A suitable and sufficient FRA must be provided on all applicable buildings. These must be written assessments dealing with the use of and risks within the building.

They should be regularly reviewed, updated and managed to reflect the ongoing issues and risks. Issues such as audits, checks and identification of problems or maintenance should be recorded.





Monitoring and management

It is the RP (including the PAP)'s role to take action to resolve issues and problems. These actions should also be recorded in the FRA to ensure the data and information is of use to the building managers and occupiers, as well as fire and rescue services.

Assistance and enforcement

The first point of call for any concerns relating to fire safety is a building's RP.

To find a 'competent person', fire engineers, fire risk assessors, surveyors and other specialists must have the necessary qualifications, experience and skills to give this advice. It may be the responsibility of the RP to check this competence. The following links provide some detail on how these specialists are vetted.

- [IFE](#)
- [RICS](#)
- [BAFE](#)
- [LFB -Guide to choosing a competent fire risk assessor](#)

Further advice can be found on the [RICS Building Safety Act](#) pages including [FAQs](#), and the [pages on fire safety](#), including [Cladding and EWS FAQs](#). You may wish to contact:

- your local authority housing department
- your local fire and rescue service and/or
- the Building Safety Regulator (for higher-risk buildings in England).

What do landlords need to maintain?

Smoke alarms

The landlord must:

- ensure that a smoke alarm is fitted and maintained on each level of the property and
- test smoke alarms on the first day of new tenancies. Subsequent testing is the responsibility of the tenant(s).

Carbon monoxide alarms

The landlord must:

- provide a carbon monoxide alarm in rooms where any solid fuel appliance is installed or where gas appliances are provided and
- test carbon monoxide alarms on the first day of new tenancies in the same way as smoke alarms. **Subsequent testing is the responsibility of the tenant(s).**

Gas and electrical compliance

The landlord must arrange for gas appliances to be serviced and checked annually by Gas Safe-registered professionals. All electrical appliances provided must carry the British Standard sign. RICS recommends that:

- the landlord arranges for electrical installations to be visually inspected on a regular basis – at least every five years, as well as every time the property is prepared for letting
- fixed wiring is tested every five years and
- (for appliances in let properties) portable appliance testing (PAT) is conducted by a competent electrician annually.

Safety certificates

Safety certificates must be made available to tenants, showing the dates when the gas and electrical appliances were last checked.

Furniture compliance

Any furnishings provided must be fire-retardant and meet current safety regulations. These should be assessed regularly by a 'competent person'.

What fire safety equipment should landlords provide?

You should consider providing fire extinguishers, fire blankets, and other safety equipment, especially in properties with shared living spaces or kitchens. **This is a legal requirement in HMO properties.** In domestic properties, a fire blanket and small wet chemical extinguisher in the kitchen would be considered satisfactory.

Fire extinguishers

All new fire extinguishers should:

- meet current British Safety Standards (BS EN3) and
- be kept somewhere that's in easy reach in an emergency.

The best place to place an extinguisher is the kitchen, as this is the starting point of most fires in homes.

Make sure:

- any extinguishers provided are checked and as appropriate serviced once a year and
- any extinguisher that has been used is replaced.

There are various types of extinguishers available.

- **Water:** can be used on materials including wood, paper or cloth; do not use water on an electrical fire, liquids or grease, or on oil or fat pan fires.
- **Dry powder:** can be used on most types of fires; however, they are no longer recommended for use indoors.
- **Foam:** these extinguishers are safe for general use, except on oil, fat pan fires or electrical fires.
- **Carbon dioxide (CO₂):** for electrical fires and fires with flammable liquids, except oil or fat pan fires.
- **Wet chemical:** ideal for fires involving cooking oils and fats.

Fire blankets

Fire blankets are made from fire-resistant fabric and are used to put out fires in kitchens. They can also be used to wrap a person whose clothes are on fire. Fire blankets are best located in the kitchen, next to the cooker.

What is required for tall multi-occupancy residential buildings?

Fire doors

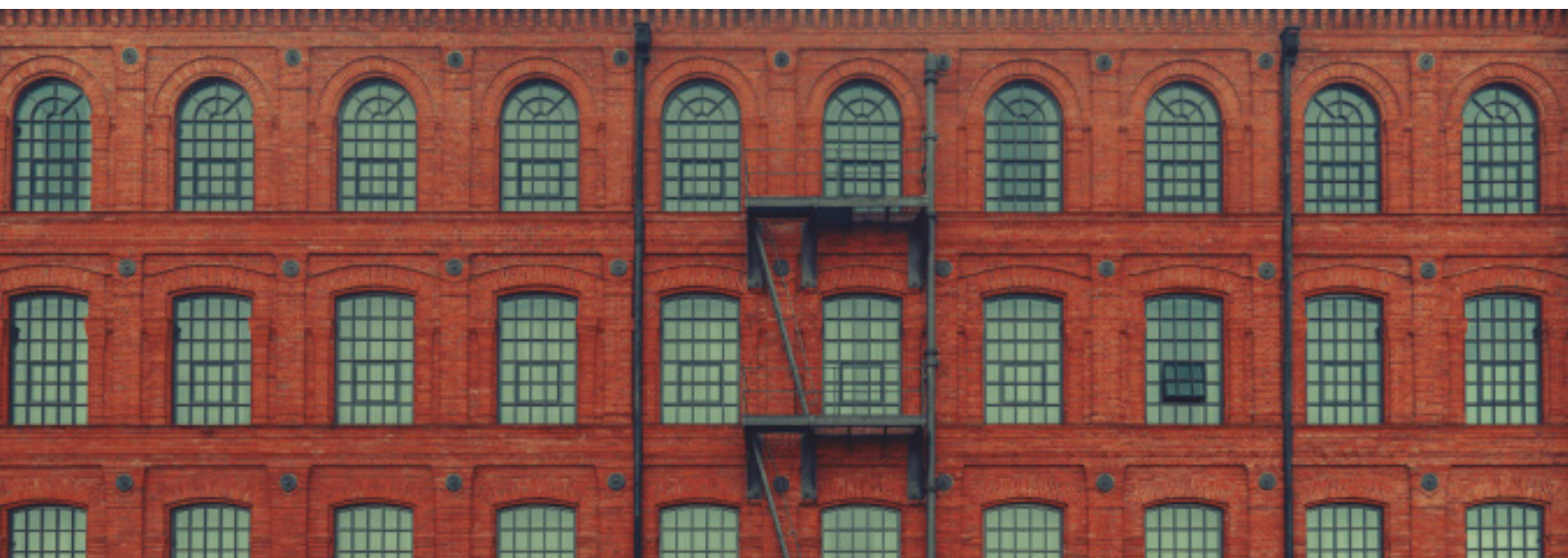
One key focus of the [Grenfell Tower Inquiry](#) was the performance and management of fire doors. Fire doors are critical to not only the individual properties, but the risk that they might pose to other occupiers if they do not perform as expected.

Flat entrance doors

Flat entrance doors (and fire doors in general) are a key part of the strategy to not let fire compromise the corridors, stairs and circulation spaces. This is essential for firefighters to put the fire out and for the other residents (if they choose, or were asked, to leave the building).

How much protection is provided is entirely reliant on the performance of that door. It is vital to ensure that:

- the door has the correct specification (often referred to as FD30S),
- it closes properly
- the gaps around the perimeter are sufficiently small (no more than 3mm), and
- the door has the correct furniture (three fire-resisting hinges, a door closer, intumescent letterboxes and a fire resistant latch) and intumescent strips with smoke seals around the top and sides of the door.



For flats in England, the introduction of the [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#) requires the landlord to inspect flat entrance doors annually and communal fire doors quarterly.

If residents are aware of any problems or any damage to a fire door, they should report it as soon as possible to the RP.

Stay put policy

Some tall multi-occupancy residential buildings may have a 'stay put' policy, meaning that, if there is a fire in a neighbouring unit, it may be safer for residents to remain in their flat or maisonette, as the fire is expected to be contained by fire-resisting walls and floors. This policy should be established by the building manager, or the fire risk assessor in consultation with the fire brigade directly.

A stay put policy may be changed by the fire brigade during a fire, in the rare event that the fire spreads beyond the dwelling of origin.

Escape routes

Landlords should make sure that each building has escape routes and that each tenant knows that access areas must be kept clear at all times. This significantly increases the chances of tenants escaping a fire safely.

There must also be a suitable balance between security and fire safety – all occupants must be able to open doors or windows as appropriate from inside and escape if there is a fire.

- Familiarise yourself with any specific fire escape routes designated for the building.
- Be aware of and plan any alternative escape routes. Do not forget to review escape plans and routes if any alterations are made to the building.
- Make sure the exit route is kept clear, including the exit itself. Any blockages on communal escape routes should be cleared.
- Locked external doors should have a thumb turn or the key left inside the lock or nearby so they can be opened easily in an emergency.
- If there is a fire, tenants should not use lifts unless a dedicated fire evacuation lift has been installed



Further guidance

We hope this guide is useful to you. If you'd like to know more about fire safety or how RICS can help, please contact us. For more advice on fire safety, our guide for homeowners/occupiers can be found [here](#).

Visit our website

Visit the [Fire safety hub](#) for more information on fire safety.

Consumer helplines and guides

[Contact one of our regulated firms](#) for a 30-minute initial consultation.

Find a Surveyor

Please note that not all firms listed on the Find a Surveyor website are RICS-regulated firms.

- [Find a surveyor in your local area](#)
- [Check whether your surveyor is regulated by RICS](#)
- [Read how RICS regulation helps consumers](#)



Discover more bite-sized guidance on fire safety

Here are some useful website addresses for related fire safety advice.

Rented or shared accommodation

- [Renting out your property \(England and Wales\)](#)
- [Housing health and safety rating system \(HHSRS\): guidance for landlords and property-related professionals](#)

Fire safety in the home

- [Fire kills](#)
- [Fire safety for home owners](#)

Accessibility and special needs

- [Disabled Living Foundation](#)

Electrical appliances

- [Living Made Easy](#)
- [Product recalls](#)
- [Age UK](#)

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