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Health and Safety > Fire > Fire Emergency Procedures and Means of Escape: In-depth

# Fire Emergency Procedures and Means of Escape: In-depth

## Summary

The ability of the occupants of a building to evacuate in the case of fire to a place of ultimate or total safety is a fundamental aspect of fire safety.

In more complex buildings, this will usually require the appointment of trained staff to assist other occupiers, eg those who may not be familiar with the building.

A “means of escape” can be defined as the structural means whereby a safe route is provided for people to travel from any location in a building or structure to a place of safety without the need of outside assistance.

Each workplace should have an emergency plan which all employees and visitors must be made aware of. There should also be procedures in place to test or exercise the evacuation procedures and to ensure that any person who may need specific assistance is identified and appropriate evacuation plans adopted.

## Employers' Duties

The following duties are imposed on the responsible person/duty holder/appropriate person by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and the Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

* The responsible/appropriate person or duty holder must, where necessary, safeguard the safety of relevant persons by ensuring that:
	+ routes to emergency exits from premises and the exits themselves are kept clear at all times
	+ emergency routes and exits lead as directly as possible to a place of safety
	+ in the event of danger, it is possible for persons to evacuate the premises as quickly and as safely as possible
	+ the number, distribution and dimensions of emergency routes and exits are adequate with regard to the use, equipment and dimensions of the premises and the maximum number of persons who may be present there at any one time
	+ emergency doors open in the direction of escape
	+ sliding or revolving doors are not used for exits specifically intended as emergency exits
	+ emergency doors are not locked or fastened that they cannot be easily and immediately opened by any person who may require to use them in an emergency
	+ emergency routes and exits are indicated by signs
	+ emergency routes and exits requiring illumination are provided with emergency lighting of adequate intensity if their normal lighting fails

Under the relevant fire safety legislation, the responsible/appropriate person or duty holder must also:

* establish and, where necessary, give effect to appropriate procedures, including safety drills, to be followed in the event of serious and imminent danger
* nominate a sufficient number of competent persons to implement those procedures in so far as they relate to the evacuation of relevant persons from the premises
* ensure that any persons exposed to serious and imminent danger are informed of the nature of the hazard and of the steps to be taken to protect them from further danger; the procedures must enable the persons concerned to stop work and immediately proceed to a place of safety in the event of their being exposed to serious, imminent and unavoidable danger
* safeguard the safety of relevant persons arising from an accident, incident or emergency related to the presence of a dangerous substance in or on the premises, by ensuring that:
	+ information on emergency arrangements is available
	+ suitable warning and other communication systems are established to enable an appropriate response
	+ where necessary, before any explosion conditions are reached, visual or audible warnings are given and relevant persons withdrawn
	+ where necessary, escape facilities are provided and maintained
	+ information is made available to relevant accident and emergency services to enable those services, whether internal or external to the premises, to prepare their own response procedures and precautionary measures
	+ immediate steps are taken to mitigate the effects of the fire, restore the situation to normal and inform those relevant persons who may be affected.

The various UK Building Regulations cover the means of escape and require that:

* buildings should be designed and constructed so that there are appropriate provisions for the early warning of fire and appropriate means of escape in case of fire
* there be a means of escape from the building to a place of safety outside the building; this designated place should be capable of being safely and effectively used at all material times.

## Employees' Duties

Under the relevant fire safety legislation, employees must co-operate with the responsible person/employer to ensure that the workplace is safe from fire and its effects, and must not do anything that will place themselves or other people at risk.

## In Practice

### Fire Emergency Procedures

The level of danger to people if fire does break out depends on many different factors. It is not possible to construct a model procedure for action in the event of fire that would be suitable for all premises. However, the following list shows the points that should normally be covered. This emergency plan can be adapted accordingly to suit different premises or risks.

1. **Action on discovering a fire**. All employees should be familiar with the procedures to be followed if they discover a fire. The emergency plan should cover how the alarm is raised and the subsequent actions, eg leaving the building, reporting the fire to another person, etc. Minimise any delays in responding.
2. **Calling the fire service**. The duty of informing the fire and rescue service immediately an alarm is sounded must be specifically allocated to a designated person or people. This is the case even if the automatic alarm system is linked to an alarm receiving centre.
3. **Detecting fires and warning occupiers**.The plan should detail the means of detecting fires where installed (eg the use of automatic fire detection systems). The plan should identify how occupiers are to be warned of a fire in the premises. This can range from staff members simply shouting “fire” to fully automated systems using sounders, voice alarms and visual signals.
4. **Stopping of machinery, isolation of power supplies**. These tasks should be carried out by previously designated people to ensure the safety of all those concerned.
5. **Evacuating premises**. Everyone must be able to escape from danger. Employees who do not have specific designated duties should start to leave the building as soon as the alarm sounds, unless instructions have been given to the contrary (eg as may be the case if [phased evacuation](https://app.croneri.co.uk/topics/fire-emergency-procedures-and-means-escape/indepth?product=133#WKID-201303201221360636-52353815) is employed). Everyone should leave in a calm, orderly manner, by the most direct route avoiding the use of lifts. Their evacuation should not be delayed by stopping to collect belongings. Depending on the circumstances of the building, fire marshals may have been nominated to ensure each area is evacuated.
6. **Means of escape**. The plan should identify the means of escape that are to be utilised, for example horizontal/vertical evacuation, evacuation lifts and equipment to be used to assist vulnerable occupiers. All escape routes should be clearly marked.
7. **Assembly points**. An [assembly point](https://app.croneri.co.uk/topics/fire-emergency-procedures-and-means-escape/indepth?product=133#DCAM-240211) should be pre-determined and everyone made aware of its location. These points should be in a safe place, preferably under cover. They should be a sufficient distance from the premises but should not create unreasonable risks (eg crossing of main road).
8. **Roll call**. One person in each department or area of the building should have the duty of maintaining a roll call so that a quick check of employees in that area can be made. The fire service should be informed on arrival if anyone is not accounted for. However, in circumstances where it is not possible to clarify the whereabouts of staff during the working day (eg if staff are constantly exiting and returning to the premises), a roll-call system may be ineffective. Any emergency arrangements should take this fact into account.
9. **Liaison with fire and rescue service**. The emergency plan should detail who will be responsible for liaising with the fire and rescue service. It may be necessary to provide the fire service with additional information about the premises. This could include the location of hazardous substances, utilities shut-offs, location of fireman switches, etc.
10. **Fire-fighting**. The plan should identify what means of fire-fighting are utilised including any portable and fixed systems. The risk assessment should be identifying whether staff members are to be trained in the use of fire-fighting equipment and how many. It must be stressed that if there is any doubt about their ability to extinguish the fire safely, it should not be tackled but left for the fire service to deal with.
11. **Responsibilities in the event of fire**. In workplaces employing large numbers of employees, it may be appropriate to nominate certain employees to carry out specific tasks in the event of fire. For example, these tasks might include:
	* acting as floor marshals, ensuring that the floor is completely evacuated during a fire evacuation and reporting this fact to a previously established control point
	* ensuring that security of the building is maintained
	* ensuring that disabled people receive any assistance required.
12. **Those requiring assistance**. Depending on the type of building and its occupancy profile there could be occasions when occupiers require assistance, whether due to a physical disability or other vulnerability. The plan should detail how such persons are to be identified and what actions are to be taken to assist such persons in the event of the need to evacuate the building.
13. **Information and training**. For an efficient fire routine it is essential that every person has received adequate instructions and fully understands them. Instruction must leave no room for doubt as to the action to be taken. It should be as brief as practicable and expressed clearly in simple language. Those with specific roles and responsibilities should also be provided with adequate information, instruction and training.
14. **False alarms**. Where the evacuation has been caused by a false alarm the occupier should ensure there are procedures for re-setting any systems such as automatic fire detection and alarm systems. They should also investigate the cause of the false alarm and take the necessary remedial action to prevent recurrence.

### Evacuation Procedures

An evacuation involves warning and informing people, identifying safe areas, accounting for people and, if necessary, providing assistance for people to reach the safe areas. Often, all this must be done at very short notice and in adverse conditions.

For many organisations, the process of evacuation can be quite straightforward, with all relevant personnel knowing how to evacuate safely by undertaking appropriate training and regular practice. However, the process of moving people out of a dangerous situation to a place of safety can be complex and difficult, particularly in environments where there may be vulnerable people.

Owing to differences in building design, construction, fire escape design, usage and occupancy, each building will represent unique problems in emergency evacuation and these factors will also determine whether evacuation should be phased or simultaneous.

Variables (such as modern working practices, the use of the premises and how people respond to a real incident) can increase risks of uncontrolled dispersals and make accounting for everyone a challenge.

It is important that the responsible person develops and exercises an appropriate evacuation strategy as part of the overall fire risk management regime. A number of factors need to be considered when developing an evacuation procedure.

* *Occupant numbers and types*: an evacuation can involve anything from one person up to hundreds, and include vulnerable people such as the very young, very old or those with mobility problems. Those who are unfamiliar with the premises, eg visitors, contractors or temporary staff, may respond differently to those who are more familiar with the procedures.
* *Location*: the location of the property could impact on the procedures to be adopted and where to evacuate to, eg in urban areas, locating a suitable place of safety/assembly point can be difficult and may require having to move some distance from the building and the crossing of busy, main roads.
* *Property type*: the type of property and the activities within it will influence evacuation procedures, eg in high-rise or large premises, it may be necessary to adopt phased evacuation. The type of property will also influence the type and number of people who could be involved in the evacuation.
* *Duration*: how long relevant people have to be evacuated for will be variable. However, the welfare of more vulnerable people may have to be taken into account and it may be necessary to consider alternative arrangements in terms of accommodation and shelter.

#### Evacuation: factors to consider

Consideration has to be given as to how the evacuation will be accomplished. Issues to be addressed include:

* where to evacuate to: the place of safety/assembly point
* who will control the evacuation
* how the instruction to evacuate can be communicated effectively and in a timely manner
* what instructions need to be given in order for people to respond effectively
* the arrangements required for assisting those who may be vulnerable or have mobility problems
* the special arrangements that need to be made for the welfare of evacuees, particularly those who are vulnerable or may have suffered injury during the incident/evacuation
* what arrangements, if any, have been made to record who has been evacuated and where they have gone to.

#### Types of evacuation

A key aspect of developing an emergency plan is the evacuation strategy for the premise, which in essence is the evacuation procedure. The evacuation strategy should not rely on external assistance and should be chosen to take into account the risk profile of the building and the allowable travel time.

There are two basic categories of evacuation procedure:

* Total evacuation of the occupants to a place of ultimate safety, by
	1. Simultaneous evacuation where it would be unreasonable to expect the occupants to remain in an affected area for a prolonged time when there is a fire. Simultaneous evacuation can be a ‘single-staged evacuation’ where an instantaneous warning from all fire alarm sounders for an immediate evacuation occurs or ‘two-staged evacuation’ where there is an investigation period (or grace period) before the fire alarm sounders are activated.
	2. Phased evacuation is a common approach adopted in high-rise where the first people to be evacuated are all those on the storey most immediately affected by the fire, and those on other floors with impaired ability to evacuate, unless their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) has determined otherwise. The remaining floors are then evacuated, usually two floors at a time, at phased intervals.
* Progressive evacuation is where occupants, are initially evacuated to a place of relative safety within the building where they can remain or, if necessary, complete the evacuation to ultimate safety as part of a managed system. This can be:
	1. Progressive horizontal evacuation of people into an adjoining fire compartment on the same level, from which they can later evacuate to a place of ultimate safety.
	2. Zoned evacuation adopted in large retail developments, where a zoned evacuation is achieved by moving the occupants away from the affected zone to an adjacent zone.

### Appointment of Competent Persons

Having determined the appropriate fire emergency procedures, including evacuation strategy, the responsible person/dutyholder should then be appointing an appropriate number of competent persons to undertake the necessary processes and procedures to ensure the safe evacuation of all occupants.

In terms of the number of people needed; all that is required are enough people to effect the safe evacuation of relevant persons (that is occupiers).

A different number of people may be required to carry out duties under other enactments such as nominating those to use fire-fighting equipment or to shut-down plant and equipment.

There are no set ratios for how many staff may require to be nominated as this is down to levels of risk. An indication of numbers required can be found in the Confederation of Fire Protection Association guidelines document *Recommended Numbers of Fire Protection Trained Staff*.

Having deemed that nominated persons are necessary, they must be competent, which according to legislation is a combination of training, experience/knowledge and “other qualities”. What these other qualities are is open to subjective interpretation, but may include the ability to:

* assess a situation quickly, safely and take the correct action
* absorb new knowledge and learn new skills
* cope with stressful and physically demanding emergency procedures
* be able to leave their normal duties such that they may be left to go immediately and rapidly to an emergency.

### Accounting for People

Roll-call procedures are used by many organisations, but have intrinsic weaknesses that should be addressed by the responsible person. Paramount to the effectiveness of this system is knowledge of who was in the building at the point of evacuation.

Very few organisations have the ability to explicitly identify who is on the premises at any given time. Roll calls rely heavily on staff following evacuation procedures, but in a real-life evacuation some people's natural instinct is to take flight from a threatening situation. The system that performed adequately during drills may therefore significantly under-perform in a real situation.

Inaccuracies with regard to who is believed to be on the premises may be caused by:

* staff temporarily leaving the premises
* poor control procedures for contractors or visitors
* fluidity in the building's occupation, eg with staff who are working flexibly.

A number of sophisticated access control systems are now available that, in the event of an alarm being activated, allow a roll-call list to be quickly printed. However, although sophisticated and extremely capable, some systems have many of the same risks associated with roll-call procedures.

### Fire Drills and Exercises

No matter how well designed and thought out an evacuation procedure is, it cannot be considered reliable until it is exercised and has proved to be workable, typically through a fire drill. Drills should be carefully planned and agreed with all relevant parties to be involved. Every drill should have clearly defined aims and objectives.

Within each building, the fire evacuation drill should be for all occupants except those who may need to ensure the security of the premises or people who, on a risk-assessed basis, are required to remain with particular equipment or processes that cannot be closed down. If there is shift working in the building then drills should be undertaken at different times of the day to include employees working shift patterns.

Where a building or site is shared with other occupants, eg in a business park, then attempts could be made to co-ordinate fire drills or at least have “desktop” reviews with neighbouring tenants to share and test arrangements.

For premises that have more than one escape route, the fire drill should follow the assumption that one exit or stairway is unavailable because of the fire. A designated person being located at a suitable point on an exit route could simulate this. Applying this scenario to different escape routes at each fire drill will encourage individuals to use alternative escape routes they may not normally use.

It may not always be beneficial to have “surprise drills” as the health and safety risks introduced may outweigh the benefits. This should be determined as part of the overall risk assessment.

#### Planning a drill

When planning a fire drill, the following factors need to be considered.

* Ensure that equipment can be safely left unattended (for the drill period).
* Nominate observers to determine the effectiveness of the drill (it may be necessary to provide such staff with training in this role).
* Inform the alarm-receiving centre if the fire detection and alarm system is monitored.
* Inform visitors and members of the public if they are present.

Ask a member of staff at random to set off the alarm by operating the nearest alarm call point using the test key. This will indicate the level of knowledge regarding the location of the nearest call point.

Throughout the drill, the responsible person and nominated observers should pay particular attention to:

* communication difficulties with regard to the roll call and establishing that everyone is accounted for
* the use of the nearest available escape routes as opposed to common circulation routes
* difficulties with the opening of final exit doors
* difficulties that may be experienced by people with disabilities or mobility issues
* the roles of specified people, eg fire wardens
* inappropriate actions, eg stopping to collect personal items, attempting to use lifts
* windows and doors not being closed as people leave.

On-the-spot debriefs that encourage feedback from everybody are useful to discuss aspects of the fire drill. Following the drill, reports from fire wardens and observations of people involved should be collated and reviewed. Any conclusions and remedial actions should be recorded and implemented.

### Disabled People and Fire Evacuation

Under fire safety legislation, it is the duty of those with responsibility for the building to provide a fire safety risk assessment that includes an emergency evacuation plan for everyone likely to be in the premises, including disabled people. Where an employer or a service provider does not make provision for the safe evacuation of disabled people from its premises, this may be viewed as discrimination and it may also constitute a failure to comply with the requirements of fire safety legislation.

Government guidance emphasises that any evacuation plan prepared should not rely on the intervention of the fire and rescue service to make it work. Typically, suitable arrangements for the evacuation of people with mobility issues will be contained within a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). The PEEP must be tailored to the person’s individual needs and will give detailed information on their movements during an escape.

For those with a disability or vulnerability, consideration must be given to a number of factors including:

* the disability of the person or persons likely to be at risk
* his or her unfamiliarity with the premises and/or the evacuation procedures
* where the person is in the building
* his or her inability to recognise alarms/evacuate the building without assistance
* characteristics of the building that may affect evacuation.

There are three distinct groups that may require some form of PEEP to be prepared.

1. Employees and regular (known) visitors to the premises.
2. Occasional (known) visitors to the premises.
3. Unknown or uncontrolled visitors who may be on the premises.

#### Evacuation of a disabled person

The evacuation of a disabled person can usually be achieved by devising simple procedures, but specialist equipment may be needed in some cases. For example, it may be appropriate to install flashing lights linked to the alarm system to alert people who have severe hearing impediments.

Risk assessment and practice drills will help to identify if any special equipment is needed and whether the emergency procedures are effective.

Evacuation lifts, chairs and other types of devices are specially designed for use by disabled people. Fire-fighting lifts may also be used as a means of evacuation.

#### Refuges

Consideration should be given to the use of additional methods of ensuring the safety of disabled people. This should include the provision of refuges, particularly for those in a wheelchair where they can wait in relative safety until:

* the evacuation lift is available
* assistance arrives
* the escape stairs can be used safely.

Refuges should be provided for each protected stairway at each storey level and should have at least 30 minutes’ fire resistance. All refuges should be clearly identified and kept free from obstruction.

The refuge is not a place for disabled people to wait until the fire service can rescue them — this is a common misconception. It is a safe waiting area for short periods only.

For those with mobility problems, a simple buddy system may suffice, where a nominated colleague will assist the disabled person in the event of an evacuation. Depending on the level of disability, it may be appropriate to have more than one buddy assigned.

#### The use of lifts

A lift to be used for the evacuation of disabled people should usually be either an evacuation lift or a fire-fighters lift, and should be operated under the control of a delegated representative, or otherwise by someone trained and authorised in the use of the lift.

A lift that is not explicitly designed for evacuation may be used for evacuation, provided that it provides the same functionality as an evacuation lift. If this is to be considered as an option then a suitable risk assessment should be undertaken to evaluate whether the lift meets the recommendations given in guidance such as BS 9999.

#### Standard plans for disabled occasional visitors

A standard plan should be devised and used where there are visitors or casual users of the building who may be present infrequently. This plan should consider the:

* disabled person’s movements within the building
* operational procedures within the building
* types of escape that can be made available from different parts of the premises
* building systems, such as the fire alarm system
* existing emergency plan for the premises.

A proactive approach will also be necessary as staff may need to provide assistance and advice to disabled users of the building as the incident develops.

### Fire Safety Signs and Emergency Lighting

Under the relevant fire safety legislation, emergency routes and exits must be provided with signs and, where necessary, adequate emergency lighting.

#### Fire safety signs

Safety signs should be clear and unambiguous, in accordance with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 and the relevant fire safety legislation.

BS 5499–4: 2013 *Safety Signs. Code of Practice for Escape Route Signing* and BS 5499-10: 2014 *Guidance for the Selection and Use of Safety Signs and Fire Safety Notices Provide Additional Guidance and Recommendations on Fire Safety Signage*. The signs should be suitable for use by those who:

* have poor vision
* suffer from dyslexia
* do not have English as their first language.

It is recommended that the fire safety directions are in picture form for ease of comprehension.

Both emergency lighting and illuminated fire safety signs require the continuous supply of uninterrupted power, preferably through fire-resistant cables.

Any door that could be confused with an exit door should be marked clearly with a sign or notice reading “no exit”, “no way out” or “private”.

Examples of acceptable signs are shown below with their definition and information on their correct positioning.



#### Notices on Doors (Fire Safety Instructions)

Notices on doors displaying fire safety instructions are generally blue in colour, as in mandatory signs, except for those showing how to operate the actual outside door, which are emergency exits and are green. Notices on doors do not require a pictogram.

It is necessary for any door fitted with a panic bolt or bar to have one of the following signs (white text on a green background) positioned prominently upon it and as close to the bar as possible.



All fire-resisting doors should have one of the following signs (white text on a blue background) displayed at eye level and on both sides.



Although there is no particular legal requirement for this in the UK, it has become common practice to display such signs.

#### Fire action notices

Fire Action Notices are still typically utilised throughout premises to provide occupiers with information on the actions to be taken in the event of a fire. The Fire Action Notices should reflect fully the procedures identified as part of the fire emergency planning process, for example, using the nearest manual call point, not using lifts, not re-entering the premises etc.

Fire Action Notices should be located at conspicuous locations. This will typically be close to manual call points, fire-fighting equipment etc.

#### Emergency lighting

Emergency lighting should be provided in line with the requirements of BS 5266–1: 2016 *Emergency Lighting. Code of Practice for the Emergency Lighting of Premises*.

The positions that emergency lighting should be placed in are:

* near each intersection of corridors
* at each exit door
* near each change of direction (other than on a staircase)
* near each staircase, so that each flight of stairs receives direct light
* near any other change of floor level
* outside each final exit
* near fire-fighting equipment
* near each fire alarm call point
* to illuminate exit and safety signs required by the enforcing authority.

### Escape Routes and Assembly Points

Part B1 of the Building Regulations 2010 (or its equivalent in Scotland and Northern Ireland), together with the accompanying Approved Document B, *Fire Safety* (2013 edition), covers means of warning and escape. It advises that the building should be designed and constructed so there are:

* appropriate provisions for the early warning of fire
* appropriate means of escape in case of fire.

The means of escape should be from the building to a place of safety outside the building. This designated place should be available to be used safely and effectively at all times. Escape routes should be planned in consultation with the local fire authority and with reference to the workplace [fire risk assessment](https://app.croneri.co.uk/topics/fire-risk-assessment/quickfacts?product=133).

#### Escape routes

The important factors highlighted by Approved Document B include the following.

* Each escape route should be protected and enclosed by [fire and smoke-resistant materials](https://app.croneri.co.uk/topics/fire-resistance-buildings/quickfacts?product=133).
* The route should be lit by suitable emergency lighting.
* The entrances and exits should have suitable signs.
* There must be suitable measures to restrict the spread of smoke in the escape route.
* There should be ventilators to remove smoke from the stairwells.
* No escape route should run close to a hazardous area, eg a chemicals store.
* Any changes in the location or use of escape routes must be notified to the fire authority.
* The fire authority must be notified of any new or proposed escape routes before they are put into effect.

Ideally there will always be at least two separate escape routes from each room, compartment or storey in a building — if possible these should be diagonally opposite to each other.

The maximum distance that people have to travel, from any point in the building to the place of safety, is usually termed the “travel distance”. The place of safety may either be:

* the final exit itself
* a relative place of safety, such as a protected fire escape stairway leading to a final exit
* a fire protected compartment which leads to a final exit and then to a place of total safety.

Escape routes must be wide enough to accommodate the expected numbers of people that will use them to allow them to escape in sufficient time. The width of an escape route is described by the narrowest part on any point of the route, which is often a doorway.

The minimum width of an escape route should be not less than 750mm. Where there are likely to be wheelchair users, the minimum width is 900mm.

Stairways on escape routes should be at least 1050mm wide but not less than the width of the escape route that leads to them. Wider stairways (over 2100mm) need a separating handrail.

Escape routes should be free of obstacles, protrusions and any other feature that might obstruct, hinder or otherwise delay people from being able to move down them freely.

#### Final exits

Ultimately, all escape routes lead to a final exit from the premises. Common requirements in respect of final exits are as follows.

* The exits should be obvious and/or signposted.
* The exits must open easily without use of a key; panic bars should be fitted to locked exits that are likely to be used by a significant number (eg 50 or more) of staff or members of the public.
* Revolving doors are normally required to have conventional exit doors sited adjacent to them, unless they fold flat.
* In modern Codes of Practice, wicket doors, goods delivery shutters and window exits are not normally acceptable as final exits and are generally regarded as unsuitable for members of the public under any circumstances.
* On escape through a final exit, it must be possible to disperse from the vicinity of the building without re-entering it.
* There is an obligation on the employer or premises owner/occupier to keep the means of escape free at all times, eg not allowing employees to prop fire doors open.

#### Assembly points

Fire escape routes should lead to a well-designated assembly point. As there are several important details to note concerning assembly points, the main advice includes the following.

* Assembly points outside the building should be indicated clearly. These points should have been selected in consultation with the fire authority and routes to them will be signposted with appropriate notices.
* For larger sites, a well-disciplined procedure should be in place to handle hundreds of people, both employees and visitors, moving from various exits to a single assembly point.
* The designation of the assembly points is important, because disabled people should not be disadvantaged by being expected to assemble at points that are too far from the evacuated premises.
* It is a good idea to have designated assembly areas in sheltered facilities, in case of a forced evacuation in poor weather.
* Employees and other persons leaving the premises must be advised which assembly areas they are to use.

### Notifying Staff, Visitors and Contractors of Emergency Procedures

The following information should be displayed prominently for the benefit of staff, visitors and contractors.

* Different types of alarms and their meanings.
* Required responses to the alarms.
* Location and direction for escape routes.
* Location of alarm points.
* Location of fire-fighting appliances and their use.
* Restrictions on the use of lifts.
* Location of assembly points.
* A reminder to leave behind all belongings if the fire alarm should sound.
* A reminder to take all personal belongings, if the bomb threat alarm should sound.

Staff members should be given:

* basic training on the location and use of escape routes
* basic training on evacuation procedures
* a copy of the written fire policy of the business.

### Premises Information Systems

Fire safety in large and complex buildings is increasingly achieved through fire-engineered solutions combining automatic fire detection, sprinklers, smoke ventilation, emergency lighting and evacuation management in an integrated system. It is important to take into account the fact that many buildings may contain substances or materials that can pose an increased threat to those who are required to fight the fire.

Fire services in the UK now recognise a need for a secure means of accessing practical information in relation to a building that can assist in their fire-fighting operations.

UK fire safety legislation requires, where necessary, the responsible person to establish procedures in the event of an emergency, which should include information on any specific hazards in the workplace. The responsible person must ensure that this information is made available to relevant accident and emergency services to enable those services, whether internal or external to the premises, to prepare their own response procedures and precautionary measures.

Fire and Rescue Services must also make arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purpose of extinguishing fires, protecting life and property, and ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent or limit damage to property resulting from action taken during firefighting.

#### Contents of a premises information system

Any premises information system should be designed so that it:

* enables the fire fighter to take account of the fire safety features in the building
* provides information about any fire-engineered system that may be present
* provides information for operating systems and about any hazards in the building
* provides information about alternative means of access.

If considering the use of a premises information system, it is important that the local fire service is contacted so as to liaise over the most appropriate system and type of information that should be provided.

## Training

* The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 or its equivalent in Scotland and Northern Ireland requires that those employed by the business on the premises are trained in the action to be taken in the event of fire and that appropriate [records](https://app.croneri.co.uk/topics/fire-emergency-procedures-and-means-escape/resources?product=133#DCAM-244411) should be kept.
* It is recommended that fire drills, eg drills that involve evacuation of the business, should occur on a regular basis, at least twice a year during each shift period (if applicable).
* In many companies there are fire wardens who are trained to use fire extinguishers correctly (at least until all the people in that zone have been evacuated). Some organisations have a policy of leaving all fire suppression to the fire service to undertake and, if so, fire wardens should be briefed accordingly.

## List of Relevant Legislation

* Localism Act 2011
* Fire Safety (Scotland) Act 2005
* Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
* [Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/health-and-safety-work-etc-act-1974-5?product=133#DCAM-234835)
* [Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/construction-design-and-management-1?product=133#WKID-201412161228480000-16203718)
* [Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/building-regulations-northern-ireland-2012-0?product=133#WKID-201205281158160371-80417866)
* [Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (Relevant Premises) Regulations 2012](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/fire-scotland-act-2005-relevant-premises?product=133#WKID-201212061213210821-83739042)
* [Building Regulations 2010](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/building-regulations-2010?product=133#DCAM-4867084)
* [Fire Safety (Employees’ Capabilities) (England) Regulations 2010](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/fire-safety-employees-capabilities-england?product=133#DCAM-4560304)
* [Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/fire-safety-regulations-northern-ireland?product=133#DCAM-4930203)
* [Fire Safety (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/fire-safety-scotland-amendment-regulations?product=133#DCAM-4969302)
* Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006
* Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004
* [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/management-health-and-safety-work?product=133#DCAM-234814)
* [Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/health-and-safety-safety-signs-and-signals?product=133#DCAM-234802)
* Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006
* [Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005](https://app.croneri.co.uk/reference-articles/law-and-guidance/legislation-tracker/regulatory-reform-fire-safety-order-2005?product=133#DCAM-944502)

## Further Information

### Publications

### Planning Portal Publications

The following are available from [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk).

* [*Approved Document B: Fire Safety: Volume 1: Dwellinghouses* (2006) (revised 2010 and 2013)](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13573/download?product=133&product=133)
* [Approved Document B *Fire Safety: Volume 2 — Buildings Other than Dwellinghouses* (2006) (revised 2010 and 2013)](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13574/download?product=133&product=133)

### Home Office Publications

The following are available from [www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government).

* [*A Short Guide to Making Your Premises Safe from Fire*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13904/download?product=133&product=133)
* *Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Animal Premises and Stables*
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Educational Premises*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13881/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Factories and Warehouses*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13882/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Healthcare Premises*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13883/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Large Places of Assembly*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13884/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Means of Escape for Disabled People*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13890/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Offices and Shops*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13885/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Open Air Events and Venues*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13886/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Residential Care Premises*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13887/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Sleeping Accommodation*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13888/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Small and Medium Places of Assembly*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13889/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Theatres, Cinemas and Similar Premises*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13891/download?product=133&product=133)
* [*Fire Safety Risk Assessment — Transport Premises and Facilities*](https://app.croneri.co.uk/file/13892/download?product=133&product=133)

### Scottish Government

The following publications are available from the FireLaw section of [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk).

* *The Evacuation of Disabled Persons from Buildings*
* *Fire Safety Guidance Booklet*
* *Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Care Homes*
* *Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Factories and Storage Premises*
* *Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Healthcare Premises*
* *Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Medium and Large Premises Providing Sleeping Accommodation*
* *Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Offices, Shops and Similar Premises*
* *Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Places of Entertainment and Assembly Guide*
* *Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Small Bed & Breakfast and Self-Catering Premises*
* *Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Small Premises Providing Sleeping Accommodation*
* *Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Transport Premises*
* *Technical Standards for Compliance with the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1990*

### Northern Ireland Publications

For Northern Ireland, fire safety documentation can be downloaded from: [www.nifrs.org/firesafe](http://www.nifrs.org/firesafe)

### British Standards Publications

The following are available from the [BSI Shop](http://shop.bsigroup.com).

* BS 5266-1:2016 *Emergency Lighting. Code of Practice for the Emergency Lighting of Premises*
* BS 5266-2:1998 *Emergency Lighting. Code of Practice for Electrical Low-mounted Way Guidance Systems for Emergency Use*
* BS 5499-4:2013 *Safety Signs. Code of Practice for Escape Route Signing*
* BS 5499-10:2014 *Safety Signs, Including Fire Safety Signs. Code of Practice for the Use of Safety Signs, Including Fire Safety Signs*
* BS 9999:2017 *Fire Safety in the Design, Management and Use of Buildings. Code of Practice*
* BS 8899: 2016 *Improvement of Fire-fighting and Evacuation Provisions in Existing Lifts. Code of Practice*
* BS EN 1838:2013 *Lighting Applications. Emergency Lighting*

### Organisations

* **Emergency Planning Society**
* <http://www.the-eps.org>
* The Emergency Planning Society is a member-led organisation for professionals dealing with emergency planning and crisis and continuity management.
* **Fire Brigades Union (FBU)**
* <http://www.fbu.org.uk>
* The FBU is a union for the main trades and industries local authority fire brigades.
* **Fire Protection Association (FPA)**
* <http://www.thefpa.co.uk>
* The FPA is the UK’s national fire safety organisation. It provides a range of fire safety audit and fire risk assessment services.
* **Fire Industry Association (FIA)**
* <http://www.fia.uk.com>
* The FIA is a trade association formed by the merger of two leading associations within the fire protection industry — Fire Extinguishing Trades Association, the trade association of companies responsible for the manufacture and maintenance of portable fire-fighting equipment, and British Fire Protection Systems Association established, the co-ordinating body for the UK fire systems industry.
* **Fire Service College**
* <http://www.fireservicecollege.ac.uk>
* The Fire Service College provides facilities for both practical and theoretical fire-fighting, fire safety and accident emergency training.
* **Industry Committee for Emergency Lighting (ICEL)**
* <http://www.icel.co.uk/>
* ICEL is the leading authority on emergency lighting in the UK and continues to be recognised internationally for its expertise in the emergency lighting sector.
* **Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE)**
* <http://www.ife.org.uk>
* The IFE is the international qualifying organisation for fire engineering and fire safety professionals. It was founded in 1918 to promote, encourage and improve the science and practice of fire extinction, fire prevention and fire engineering. The IFE maintains a register of fire risk assessors.

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