

Fire Regulations and Risk Assessment

From October 1st new fire safety laws came into force making businesses directly responsible for the safety of all premises users. As a result, fire certificates have been abolished in favour of risk assessments to be completed by a designated 'responsible person'.

The new laws affect every type of tourism business including self-catering and smaller B&Bs who were previously exempt from requiring a fire certificate.

The Assessment

The fire risk assessment must be carried out with the focus on the safety of all 'relevant persons' including employees and visitors. The assessment will help identify where risks can be removed or reduced and the precautions needed to protect against those risks. A written record of assessment is required by law if you employ 5 or more people, however, we do recommend that all businesses keep a record of the assessment's outcomes. Fire officers are at liberty to carry out spot checks on *any* business at *any* time and the fines for non-compliance are hefty.

The government do not anticipate that any significant improvements to premises will be needed providing fire precautions have been properly maintained with no material alterations to the property or a fire certificate has been issued previously.

The assessment can either be carried out in-house or by a fire safety assessor.

Smaller establishments or those with an employee confident enough to carry out the assessment themselves should find that compiling the assessment is a fairly simple task. Using the government's guides (<http://www.firesafetylaw.communities.gov.uk/>) in conjunction with the content of a previous fire certificate (if available) will ensure you comply with the new laws. You may also wish to use online tools, such as Fire Safety Toolkit from CSS (<http://www.cocomo.co.uk/page1.aspx?page=ProductOverview>) which has been designed specifically for hospitality businesses or the Fire Protection Association's free online assessor (<http://www.fpa-fireriskassessment.com/>), to further assist you.

Using a Fire Safety Assessor can give you the added peace-of-mind of compliance but will bare additional costs. If you do wish to use an external assessor we recommend you consult the Institution of Fire Engineers' Register of Fire Risk Assessors & Auditors (<http://www.ife.org.uk/frr/>) for assessors in your area.

Quality Assurance Scheme and Insurance

VisitBritain have confirmed that all assessed properties will need to be able to produce evidence of having completed a fire risk assessment. Failure to do so may have an impact on the award of a rating.

It is important that businesses check with insurers that they are adhering to their policies. If fire regulations are deliberately breached, they will avoid making payments.

We strongly recommend all members record the outcome of the fire risk assessment, regardless of the size of their property / business.

More Information

- Government guidance on completing the risk assessment (<http://www.firesafetylaw.communities.gov.uk/>)
- Business Link's guide to the fire risk assessment (<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?r.s=sl&topicId=1074253164>)