



Gloucestershire
Fire and Rescue Service
Working together for a safer Gloucestershire

Business Fire Safety

Supporting you to keep your business safe



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

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Is your business safe from fire?

A fire can be devastating for any business but particularly small businesses. Even a small fire may prevent a business from trading for some time, which may have a significant knock-on effect that clients and customers go elsewhere. In many cases, the businesses never truly recover and cease trading within a year of reopening.

This short guide is intended to aid businesses in preventing fires, reducing unwanted fire alarm activations and keeping staff and customers safe through carrying out a fire risk assessment.

Keeping compliant with fire safety legislation

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, places obligations on to the responsible persons for all businesses.

From 1st October 2023 new fire safety legislation came into effect. Every business must carry out a fire risk assessment of their business, then the significant findings from that fire risk assessment must be recorded and available on site for inspection by an authorised Fire Safety Inspector.

5 steps to a Risk Assessment

- ☑ Identify the fire hazards
 - Have you found anything that could start a fire?
 - Have you found anything that could burn?
 - How could a fire start?
 - Think about heaters, lighting, electrical equipment and hot works
 - Have you considered smoking and the use of matches?
 - Hot processes, welding and grinding should also be taken into account
- ☑ Identify people at risk
 - Everyone is potentially at risk from fire
 - Think about night staff or people not familiar with the premises, such as visitors or customers
 - Children, the elderly or disabled people are especially vulnerable
 - Who could be at risk?
 - Who could be especially at risk?
- ☑ Evaluate, remove or reduce the risks.
 - Have you assessed the risks in the workplace?
 - Do you have enough escape routes?
 - Have you planned escape routes?
 - Have you made sure people will be able to safely find their way out, even at night?
 - Is a fire alarm system needed?
 - Are signs, such as fire exit signs, needed?
 - Is emergency lighting required?
 - Are fire extinguishers needed and, if so, where should they be located?
 - Have you kept sources of ignition away from fuel sources?
 - Have you made sure that everyone is safe in case of fire?
 - Do you have a fire safety plan?
 - Who will call the fire and rescue service?
 - Could you put out a small fire and stop it spreading?

- ☑ Record your findings, prepare an emergency plan and provide training.
 - Have you planned what everyone will do if there is a fire?
 - Do all your staff know the plan?
 - Have staff had up-to-date training and completed a fire drill?
 - Have you included temporary staff?
 - Are you maintaining everything that is provided or required to keep people safe from fire?
 - Formulate your action plan to reduce the fire hazards. The plan is an inventory of actions, normally prioritised and time constrained to devise, maintain or improve controls. Remember, where appropriate, this can be eliminating or controlling hazards (e.g. better separation of combustible materials from ignition sources)

- ☑ Review and update the fire risk assessment regularly
 - Keep your assessment under regular review. Remember to update it as risks or hazards change. If you make any significant changes, you should review your risk assessment. Have you made any changes to the building since the last assessment?
 - Have you had a fire or a near miss?
 - Have stock levels changed significantly?
 - Have you started to store chemicals or dangerous substances?

See www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities for more information



Preventing false fire alarm activations

False fire alarm activations can cause disruption to your business. If they become too frequent, staff members may become complacent and not react as quickly as they should. The most common causes of false alarms are:

- Contaminants entering the detector head such as dust or fumes from cooking.
- Accidental breakage of manual call points.

Recording all false activations in a fire logbook will help business managers and alarm engineers identify issues or faults in the alarm system. Businesses should check the following with their alarm engineer if false activations are increasing:

- Is there a fault with a particular detector head?
- Is it the wrong type of detector head for that particular location?
- Is it the right type of detector head but badly positioned?

Arson

Simple arson prevention measures

Anti-social behaviour and small acts of arson such as rubbish or wheelie bin fires may be reduced by following these simple steps:

- Always try to keep wheelie bins away from your building. If possible, keep them in a lockable compound or locked shut at night.
- Keep the build up of combustible rubbish to a minimum and any unwanted items such as pallets should be suitably disposed of as soon as possible.
- Secluded, unsecure loading yards should be illuminated with security lighting to try to discourage any antisocial behaviour. The cutting back of trees or bushes to make service yards appear more exposed will aid in this area.



Involve and inform your staff

Staff are a big asset to your business security arrangements. Developing a vigilant workforce who support compliance with your fire safety and business security procedures will help healthy business growth and general operations. When closing for the day make sure staff have procedures for closing down and securing up before leaving the building and site. Make sure your staff know about fire prevention and its importance to you, having a way of reporting concerns will help improve operations.

Common fire safety issues identified by inspectors

The following topics are some common fire safety issues that Fire Safety Inspectors have found when auditing businesses.

Evacuations

Each business will be responsible for ensuring the safe evacuation of all employees, contractors and customers. Everyone should be able to evacuate to a place of safety without the intervention of the Fire Service. If your premises are accessible to disabled persons, there should be suitable procedures in place to evacuate these people. To achieve this, extra equipment, such as evacuation chairs may be required. Any staff members that could be expected to use such equipment must be suitably trained in its use.



Licensed premises

Any premises licenced by the local authority for the sale of alcohol must have the significant finding from their fire risk assessment written down. The safe occupancy figure for the premises is considered a significant finding and staff members should be made aware of this to prevent any overcrowding. Pubs and restaurants often employ young people under the age of 18, such as kitchen porters or glass collectors. These young people are considered vulnerable due to lack of confidence, experience and life skills and as such, a young person's risk assessment must be carried out prior to their employment. This assessment should

highlight if they will come into contact with any hazardous substances or processes, what fire safety training they have been given and exactly what they are to do on discovering a fire or hearing the fire alarm system.



Open fire and wood burning stoves

Open fire and wood burning stoves are becoming very popular in pubs and restaurants and if properly managed can provide a great feature for the business. The hazards with introducing naked flames into a premises needs to be thoroughly risk assessed. The following points should be considered:

- Chimneys or flues need to be regularly swept by a HETAS approved registered chimney sweep.
- If burning wood, only use properly seasoned timber to prevent excess clogging of the chimney with creosote and tar.
- Do not store logs directly next to the open fire or wood burning stove.
- Only trained staff to place fuel on the fire. Signage should be displayed to discourage customers from putting anything onto the fire. Compile an open fire procedure.

Maintenance and recording of fire safety equipment and training

All fire safety equipment must have routine maintenance and all staff must have training on induction and annually.

Documentation of Fire Safety Procedures: A fire logbook serves as a comprehensive record of all fire safety protocols, inspections, and maintenance activities.

Legal Compliance: Maintaining a fire logbook is a legal requirement under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It must be available for inspection by fire officers and demonstrates that a business is adhering to fire safety law.

Regular Monitoring and Maintenance: By recording regular inspections and maintenance of fire safety equipment, the logbook helps ensure that all systems are functioning correctly and that any faults are promptly addressed. This proactive approach significantly reduces the risk of equipment failure during emergencies.

Training and Awareness: The fire logbook can also be used to track fire safety training for employees, ensuring that everyone is aware of fire procedures and their responsibilities in case of an emergency.

Liquid petroleum gas

Liquid petroleum gas cylinders (LPG) are very commonly used for patio heaters or barbecues, but they can be very hazardous if not used responsibly. Before allowing this hazardous substance onto your premises, its use should be carefully risk assessed. Only the minimum required amount of cylinders should be stored on site and cylinders should be properly disposed of when no longer required. For more guidance and information on LPG, contact the Health & Safety Executive who enforce the use and storage of hazardous substances.



Lithium-ion batteries

With the increasing number of lithium-ion battery fires, it is imperative for business owners to stay updated on evolving fire safety regulations and best practice. Failing to address these risks can lead to legal consequences, reputational damage and serious harm to your staff or property. To help protect your business, ensure that your fire risk assessment is up to date making sure you incorporate any potential hazards associated with lithium-ion batteries. Designating a safe charging area and making sure these areas are well-ventilated, equipped with appropriate signage and regularly monitored. Store batteries in fire resistant containers when not in use. Make sure staff are trained on safe charging procedures and all emergency procedures.

Post fire

Following any fire at a business premises, a full review of the incident and fire risk assessment should be carried out. Investigating the cause of the fire and acting on the findings, may prevent another fire occurring. Not only should the cause of the fire be reviewed but also the actions taken by employees, did they all evacuate quickly, was the evacuation procedure followed correctly? The review should establish if any fire safety systems worked effectively and confirm if your business needs to upgrade the fire safety provisions.



If the fire at your premises resulted in the attendance of the Fire and Rescue Service, a Fire Safety Inspector may arrange to carry out an audit of your business. This audit is not only aimed to check compliance but also to provide the best fire safety advice to your business, from a qualified fire safety specialist. The Fire Safety Inspector will be able to pass on any information gathered from the operational fire crews that attended the incident, both what went well and any areas of concern.

For advice and guidance for commercial fire safety email: fire.safety@glosfire.gov.uk

or visit www.glosfire.gov.uk/business-fire-safety



Useful contacts

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters

Quayside House
Quay Street, Gloucester
01452 888777
www.glosfire.gov.uk

British Red Cross

0344 871 11 11

National Grid 24 hour Gas Emergency Service

0800 111 999

ChildLine

0800 11 11

The Silver Line

(Helpline for older people)
0800 4 70 80 90
(24 hours a day, every day)

Severn Trent Water

0800 783 4444 (24hr emergency)

Gloucester Samaritans

116 123 free from any phone

Websites

General advice on all aspects of life in the United Kingdom

www.gov.uk

Health Advice

www.nhs.uk

Highway Code

www.gov.uk/highway-code

Housing Advice

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/housing/council-housing-association>

Citizens Advice Bureau

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Driving

Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)
www.gov.co.uk/contact-the-dvla

Gloucestershire Police

www.gloucestershire.police.uk

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