

FIRE SAFETY LAW

The fire safety laws across the UK are designed to provide a minimum fire safety standard in all non-domestic premises with very few exceptions.

The following are the principal pieces of legislation which govern fire safety throughout the United Kingdom.

England & Wales

- *The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005*

Scotland

- *The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005*
- *The Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006*

Northern Ireland

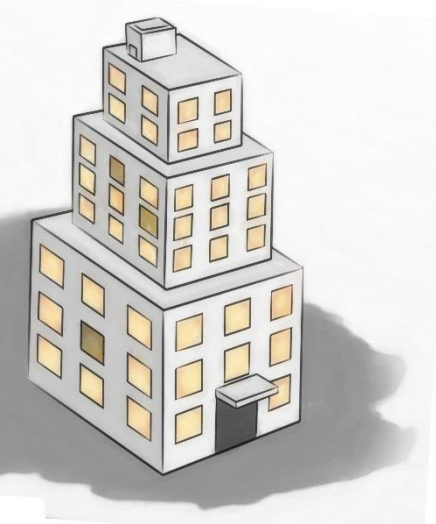
- *The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006*
- *The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010*



WHERE DOES THE LAW APPLY?

After coming into effect on October 1st 2006, The Regulatory Reform Order applies to nearly all premises and covers almost every type of building and structure.

There are very few exceptions, so the chances are that your property or place of work must adhere to the law.



Examples of places which must conform:

- Offices and shops
- Factories and warehouses
- Schools, colleges and nurseries
- Care homes, sheltered housing and hospitals
- Pubs, clubs and restaurants
- Hotels, B&B's and hostels
- Community halls, places of worship and other community premises

ENFORCEMENT

Fire authorities are the main agency responsible for enforcing the law. Fire authorities will look into complaints, carry out investigations after fires and carry out targeted inspections.

Where poor fire safety management is discovered they can prosecute.

If there is a very serious risk to life, the fire authority can issue a notice preventing the premises being used for certain things, or preventing people from using all or part of the premises.

SO, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

The person responsible for fire safety is anyone who to any significant degree:

- Controls the premises, ie the owner or the managing company
- Controls activities on the premises (occupier)
- Employs people

They are responsible for the safety of people who may be:

- Legitimately on the premises, or who may not on the premises but might be directly affected should a fire occur on the site

In many cases, responsibility may be shared between several people but it is **not** the responsibility of the fire service or any other statutory body.



WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

The person or persons responsible, must make sure that everyone is safe from fire. You must regularly review the sites fire-risk assessment to determine what the risks are and to identify those measures necessary to minimise said risks to an acceptable level.

Fire Risk Assessments are mandatory and you must keep a written risk assessment if your business has more than 5 people.

UK law also states that your fire alarm must be '**adequately maintained**'. This should take the form of a **weekly test (by the site responsible person)** and **regular servicing**.

The Government recommends that a fire alarm system should not go more than 6 months without being inspected by a competent person. For larger sites, it is advised that this be reduced to 3 months.



DO I NEED A FIRE ALARM SYSTEM?

Current UK regulations state that all businesses must have '**an appropriate fire detection system**'. This basically means that in the event of a fire, it can be quickly and easily detected and all occupants be warned. **In few cases, this does not necessarily mean that you require a fire alarm system.** However, this would be determined by your Fire Risk Assessment, taking into account such factors as; size of premises, possible storage of hazardous substances and vulnerability of occupants.

Details on how to compile your Risk Assessment can be found at www.gov.uk

WHAT TYPE OF FIRE ALARM DO I NEED?

There are a number of types of fire alarm available.

Conventional – Most commonly found in small buildings. The site is split into various zones, with the panel lighting a corresponding LED to indicate the location of the fire.

Addressable – More sophisticated than the aforementioned, addressable systems are able to specify exactly which devices have been triggered and will display detailed system information via a LCD or colour screen.

Wireless – Becoming increasingly more popular, wireless system typically work like an addressable system, but negate the need for long and often intrusive cabling. They also dramatically cut down install time.

WHAT CATEGORY DO I NEED?

The category assigned to fire alarm systems denotes what areas throughout the building are covered.

Principally, there are eight categories in effect, the key ones are:

L5 – A 'custom' category. With detection in high risk areas/custom areas

L4 – Detection covering escape routes and areas of circulation

L3 – Detection on escape routes and all rooms that open onto escape routes

L2 – The same as L3 but with detection in high risk areas and rooms adjacent to escape routes

L1 – Full coverage. This will include nearly all spaces and voids



Your Fire Risk Assessment or insurer should determine what category of system you require.

Full descriptions of all system types can be found on our website.

WHAT IS BS 5839?

BS 5839 is the British Standard that governs the fire detection and fire alarm system design for buildings. Like all British Standards, BS 5839 is not law. It is however the best practice guidelines, and serves as our benchmark for both servicing and installation.

