NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Fire Risk Assessment Guidance (text only)

Version 2 - dated March 2014

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
www.notts-fire.gov.uk

CONTENTS

Introduction

This document suggests information that should be contained in a fire risk assessment record. When completed in accordance with all suggestions it may serve as a record of a fire risk assessment as required by the **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999**

From the time these Regulations came into force it is a requirement for Responsible Persons to:

- Carry out a fire risk assessment of the premises taking into consideration all employees and all other (relevant) persons who may be affected by a fire in the workplace, and to make adequate provision for any disabled people with special needs who use or may be present in the premises;
- Identify the significant findings of the risk assessment and the details of anyone who might be especially at risk in case of fire. If more than five people are employed it is a requirement that these significant findings are recorded; *(However it is recommended that a written record is produced on all occasions to assist with the process of on going reviews)*
- Provide and maintain such fire precautions as are necessary to safeguard those who use the workplace; and
- Provide information, instruction and training to employees about the fire precautions in the workplace

Further guidance can be found in the Fire safety law and guidance documents for business published by the Department for Communities and Local Government. These are available to purchase or download free by visiting the website: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/series/fire-safety-law-and-guidance-documents-for-business

The recording of information within this document should be in a narrative format and not simply a Yes or No answer to a question.

Fire Risk Assessment (How to complete)

Divide the premises into areas/rooms/floors as necessary and carry out a fire risk assessment for each part. During the assessment and evaluation of the findings you should bear in mind the following.

Significant Findings:

When undertaking the fire risk assessment, the significant findings should be recorded. The significant findings should include:

- a record of the protective and preventative measures already in place to control the risks;
- what further action, if any, needs to be taken to reduce risk sufficiently;

Review and Revision

The assessment should be reviewed or revised following any of the following:-

- *Any significant change of work practices*
- *Any significant change in staff levels*
- *Any structural or material alteration to the premises*
- *Any near miss or fire*
- *Annually from the date of the last assessment or review*

1 Premises Particulars

Specify the following particulars:-

- *Name and Address of Premises:*
- *Telephone Number:*
- *Use of Premises:*
- *Guidance used as the basis for assessment:*
- *Responsible Person (Owner/Employer/Person(s) in Control of the premises):*
- *Date of Risk Assessment:*
- *Date of Review:*
- *Name & relevant details of the person carrying out the Fire Risk Assessment:*
- *Experience and qualifications of the Fire Risk Assessor:*
- *Names and positions of persons consulted by the Fire Risk Assessor:*
- *Previous fire losses at the premises:*

2 Relevant Fire Safety Legislation

Specify the title(s) of the applicable legislation eg: The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

State the enforcing authority for that legislation eg: The Health and Safety Executive

3 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PREMISES

Give a general description of the premises and the use to which it is put.
Include the following details:

• *Construction detail of the premises (i.e. Brick/Timber/Concrete)*

• *Approximate age of premises*

• *Times in use*

• *Total number of persons employed in the premises at any one time*

• *Total number of persons who may resort to the premises at any one time*

• *Size of the premises (Length and Width and/or area)*

• *Number of floors and staircases*

4 PEOPLE ESPECIALLY AT RISK FROM FIRE

Identify and specify the likely location of people at significant risk in case of fire, indicating why they are at risk, and what controls are or need to be in place:

Consider:

- *Persons who may be asleep in your premises*
- *Employees, visitors, and other persons whose mobility, hearing or eyesight is impaired*
- *Other persons in the premises if the premises are multi-occupied · Varied working practices*
  (i.e. areas of your premises occupied when others are not)
- *Areas where employees/others are isolated*
- *Young persons*
- *Contractors*
- *Visitors / Customers*

5 PLAN DRAWING

To assist the assessor in completing an assessment, and employees in understanding the findings and evacuation procedures/plans it is recommended that a single line drawing of the premises/area/room/floor is prepared, which should be attached to the risk assessment.

The plan should show :-

- *Escape routes,*
- *number of exits,*
- *number of stairs,*
- *fire resisting doors,*
- *fire resisting walls and partitions,*
- *places of safety etc.*
- *Fire safety signs and notices (i.e. pictographic fire exit signs, fire action notices etc.*
- *The location of fire warning devices (i.e. break-glass alarm points, sounders, rotary gongs)*
- *The location of emergency lights (to include hand held torches if provided)*
- *The location and type of fire fighting equipment (i.e. water extinguishers, foam extinguishers, etc.)*

6 FIRE HAZARDS AND THEIR ELIMINATION

Consider any fire hazards within the area/room/floor:

- ***Ignition sources***
  Smoking materials /matches, lighters etc.
  Naked flames /hot work processes,
  Fixed /portable heaters,
  Boilers /engines /machinery,
  Cooking,
  Lighting equipment,
  Friction /sparks,
  Arson,

- ***Fuel Sources***
  Flammable liquids /solvents /oils etc,
  Chemicals,
  Wood /paper /cardboard etc,
  Plastics /rubber /foam,
  Furniture and furnishings,
  Flammable gases
  Textiles,
  Display materials,
  Waste materials,

- ***Work Processes***
  Can any fire risks identified be removed, replaced or reduced?

- ***Structural Features***

  Consider any structural features that could promote the spread of fire (e.g. open staircases, openings in walls and floors, large voids above ceilings and below floors). Additionally consider the potential combustibility of any structural features.

7 FIRE PROTECTION MEASURES

Consideration of the following factors should be recorded in a narrative format and not simply a Yes/No answer to a question.

7a MEANS OF ESCAPE – HORIZONTAL EVACUATION

Consider: -

- *How fire hazards are controlled within the area/room/floor*
- *The need to control and monitor the number of occupants*
- *The number of occupants in the area/room/floor and their familiarity with the premises*
- *The likely spread of fire*
- *The time it would probably take to escape (2-3 minutes?)*
- *In the event of a fire can all persons safely evacuate the premises after taking into account the fire risks in the area?*
- *Travel distances How far to the nearest exit?*
- *Definition and number of escape routes. Easily identified and available at all times?*
- *Number and widths of exits. Sufficient to evacuate all occupants quickly and easily?*
- *Inner rooms situations. Is there exit only available through another room?*
- *Corridors. Do they need to be protected by fire resisting walls and doors?*
- *Dead-end conditions. Is there only one way out?*
- *Door openings and door fastenings. Can door(s) be opened easily without the use of a key?*
- *Do all escape routes lead to a place of safety (e.g. not to an enclosed yard)?*
- *Housekeeping. Is there storage of combustibles or obstructions in escape routes?*
- *Sufficient number of stairways?*
- *Provisions for people with disabilities. Deaf, Blind, Mobility issues or special needs etc.*

7b MEANS OF ESCAPE – VERTICAL EVACUATION

Consider: -

- *Are there sufficient stairways to get all occupants out of the premises even if one stairway is inaccessible due to fire?*
- *Are the stairways wide enough to get all occupants out of the premises? (including disabled persons)*
- *Do the doors, walls and partitions to the stairways need to be fire resisting (i.e. could a fire spread to the staircase(s) before occupants have evacuated taking in to account the fire hazards present)?*
- *Do the exits from the stairways lead to place of safety (e.g. not to an enclosed yard)*

7c MEASURES TO LIMIT FIRESPREAD AND DEVELOPMENT

COMPARTMENTATION

Consider:-

- *Identifying compartment boundaries, walls, floors shafts such as staircases and lifts.*
- *The integrity of all joints.*
- *Firestopping around ductwork and services that pass through compartment walls.*
- *Measures to prevent the passage of heat and smoke through ductwork.*
- *Identify the standard of fire resistance required.*

WALL AND CEILING LININGS

Consider:-

- *Protected escape routes, horizontal and vertical should be free of decorative adornments and hangings which are not fire retardant.*
- *Thermoplastic materials in suspended ceilings and lighting diffusers.*
- *Classification of Linings required in circulation spaces.*

7d EMERGENCY LIGHTING

Consider:-

• If the premises are in use during the hours of darkness (consider winter months) escape lighting should be provided. (However, adjacent Street lighting through external glazing, may be considered)
• Areas of the premises with no natural light (internal spaces) should be provided with escape lighting.
• If the premises are large and/or complex an escape lighting system should be installed to the current British Standard.
• Where the premises are small a number of hand held torches strategically located may be sufficient?
• When operated is there sufficient illumination for occupants to see the external escape routes clearly?
• Does the system operate on sub-circuit failure?
• Is there sufficient illumination at changes in level and changes in direction?
• Is there sufficient illumination to show fire exit doors and their operation?
• Is there sufficient illumination to show fire alarm call points and fire fighting equipment?

7e FIRE SAFETY SIGNS AND NOTICES

• Do all fire safety signs comply with the current standard (pictogram – symbols)?
• Are there sufficient fire exit signs on the escape routes?
• Are internal fire resisting doors indicated with "Fire Door-Keep Shut" notices?
• Are internal fire resisting doors to cupboards indicated with "Fire Door –Keep Locked Shut" signs?
• Where necessary are fire exit doors marked with "Fire Exit-Keep Clear" notices? (outside face)
• Are there signs indicating how to use door opening mechanisms e.g. "Push Bar to Open"?
• Are general fire action notices displayed stating what to do in a fire situation?
• Is fire-fighting equipment indicated?

7f FIRE WARNING SYSTEMS

• Is there a suitable fire warning system to alert occupants in the event of a fire?
• If the premises are large and/or complex an electric fire alarm should be installed to the current British Standard.
• Can all occupants be alerted by the alarm when it is sounded? (Including persons with hearing difficulties)
• Is there a need for automatic fire detection i.e. sleeping risks, multi-occupied premises, varied working, inner rooms situations, mezzanine floors?

7g FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT

• Is there sufficient fire fighting equipment provided for the area/room/floor?
• Is the fire fighting equipment appropriate for the risks?
• Is the fire fighting equipment simple to use?
• Has a competent person checked fire extinguishers within the last twelve months?
• Does it conform to a standard?
• Is the fire fighting equipment located on the escape routes and near to exit doors?
• Is it securely hung on wall brackets or suitable floor plates, unobstructed and easily accessible?

7h AUTOMATIC FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS

• What type of system is provided? (Specific risk coverage, partial building or whole building coverage)
• What type of supply of suppression media? (e.g. water mains fed, water tank supply, inert gas pressurized cylinder, etc.)
• Is the system for life or property protection?
• Has a competent person checked the system within the last twelve months?
• What standard does it conform to?
• Is the control equipment clearly indicated by signage external to the building?
• Is it linked to sound the fire alarm upon its operation?

8 MANAGEMENT – PROCEDURES AND ARRANGEMENTS

In the course of the fire risk assessment, there is a need to ensure that there are formal, documented procedures for people to follow in the event of fire, and that the procedures in question are appropriate.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (EAP)

Produce an emergency action plan, which details procedures in the event of a fire in the building.

The EAP should cover:-

- *all foreseeable events*
- *the action employees should take if they discover a fire*
- *how people will be warned*
- *how the evacuation is carried out (action on hearing fire warning)*
- *inclusion of the evacuation of visitors and people with disabilities*
- *assembly points*
- *procedures for checking the premises have been evacuated*
- *identify escape routes*
- *fire fighting equipment*
- *duties and identities of persons with specific responsibilities in the event of a fire*
- *where appropriate the isolating of machinery and processes*
- *how the fire service are called and by who*
- *liaison with fire service on arrival*
- *the importance of not attempting to re-occupy the building until instructed to do so by the fire and rescue service.*

METHOD OF CALLING THE FIRE SERVICE

Establish and record the method by which the fire service would be called in the event of a fire.
i.e. (Automatic/person)

NOTE In cases of false alarms, where the fire and rescue service does not attend the building, the decision to re-enter the building will need to be taken by a responsible person.

LIAISON WITH THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

In large and complex buildings, it is important that there are arrangements for local fire and rescue service crews to familiarize themselves with the building and, with, for example, the facilities for fire-fighting. In some such buildings, there might be a need for pre-planning emergency procedures with the fire and rescue service. In addition, it is important that the fire procedures for the building address summoning of the fire and rescue service in the event of fire and reception of the fire and rescue service on arrival.

ROUTINE INSPECTIONS

The fire risk assessment is somewhat similar to the MOT inspection of a car; it reflects the conditions found by an assessor at a particular point in time. There is, however, a need to ensure that, on a more routine basis, there are means for detecting deficiencies in fire precautions. Accordingly, it is appropriate for the fire risk assessor to investigate arrangements for suitably trained or instructed building occupants to carry out routine inspections of the fire precautions.

Such inspections need no specialist knowledge, but can make a major contribution towards the maintenance of adequate fire precautions by checking that, for example, manual call points, fire detectors, sprinkler heads, etc. remain unobstructed, self-closing fire doors operate correctly, fire exit doors that are not in normal use open easily and that there is no storage in escape routes that should remain relatively sterile (e.g. protected staircases). Sometimes these matters are addressed in the course of health and safety inspections or more specific fire audits. Often, more frequent day-to-day inspections, of a basic nature, can be carried out by, for example, patrolling security officers.

9 STAFF TRAINING AND FIRE DRILLS

Since failure of people to react correctly has been associated with many fires that have resulted in serious loss of life, an important part of the fire risk assessment is consideration of arrangements for giving instruction and training to staff on fire safety matters and for carrying out fire drills. Fire safety induction training for all new staff is particularly important.

Thereafter, fire safety refresher training needs to be given periodically. The frequency of refresher training needs to take into account the turnover of staff, the complexity of the building and the fire procedures, and the fire risk. There will often be a need to provide additional, or special, training for people who have special responsibilities in the event of fire; this could, for example, include fire wardens.

Legislation does not specifically require that fire drills are carried out. However, generally fire drills are important in all except the smallest building. The drills are a means of reinforcing training, and provide feedback on the effectiveness of the training that has been carried out.

10 MANAGEMENT – MAINTENANCE & TESTING

MAINTENANCE AND TESTING OF FIRE PROTECTION MEASURES

• Are there adequate arrangements for testing and maintenance of all fire protection measures?
• Is the workplace itself adequately maintained in order to avoid certain fire hazards?

NOTE Recommendations for testing and maintenance of systems are given in the relevant British Standards for the particular systems and equipment.

RECORD KEEPING

Legislation does not specifically require that records of training, inspection, testing, maintenance, etc. are kept. Nevertheless, such records are an important means of demonstrating, if required, that all legislative obligations have been satisfied.

Consider :

• any records that exist
• to make recommendations, where appropriate, for keeping of records.
• records can also be important in demonstrating that there have been no breaches of good practice that could result in litigation in the event of injury to an occupant of the building in the event of fire.

11 FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY CONSEQUENCES OF FIRE

- Consequences need to take into account the extent of injury that would occur to occupants in anticipated scenarios, and take into account the number of occupants likely to be affected.
- Consequences are more serious if a greater number of occupants are affected.
- Equally, serious consequences include, for example, a situation in which there is a high likelihood that a small number of occupants (even one) will be subject to serious injury in the event of fire.
- The likely consequences of fire need not, and usually cannot, be expressed in a statistical manner (e.g. probability of death or serious injury). All that is required is a subjective judgement that classifies likely consequences of fire into one of several pre-determined categories.
- Since the assessment of these factors is subjective, the use of numbers to express fire risk does not confer any greater accuracy to the assessment of fire risk.
- The pre-determined categories of likely consequences of fire may be described in the form of words, such as "slightly harmful", "harmful" and "extremely harmful", provided these terms are defined, or in the form of numbers (e.g. 1, 2 and 3), but there will be a need for at least three categories.
- However, if likely consequences are expressed in the form of numbers, care is necessary to ensure that it is not implied, for instance, that a likelihood of "2" indicates that fire is twice as likely to result in casualties compared to a likelihood of "1".

ASSESSMENT OF FIRE RISK

- In the process of every fire risk assessment, an assessment should be made of the fire risk in the building. It is usual and acceptable for the fire risk to be expressed in terms of one of a number of pre-determined categories of risk (e.g. “trivial”, “tolerable”, “moderate”, “substantial” or “intolerable”).

12 ACTION PLAN

- Make a list of the fire safety deficiencies found from the fire risk assessment.
- Prioritise and rectify the deficiencies.
- Once fully rectified, amend the fire risk assessment sheets and fire safety records.
- Review the fire risk assessment as appropriate.