

Guidance Notes for Fire Risk Assessment

What is a Fire Risk Assessment?

This Fire Risk Assessment Template is suitable for: Bed and Breakfast premises and all types of individual self-catering properties. This document and the accompanying Fire Risk Assessment form are designed to record the apparent fire risks in your premises and provoke thought and action on how to improve fire safety within the workplace. It should be read and fully understood by the Responsible Person(s) and kept in a safe place such as your Health & Safety file. Once complete it should provide you with enough information to analyse the risk and construct an action plan for any amendments necessary to the property or its precautions. Completion of this document does not completely satisfy the requirements of the fire safety standard agreed with the Isle of Man Fire and Rescue Service (IOMFRS). The assessment should be reviewed annually or when any physical or procedural changes are made in the premises.

The Fire Risk Assessment is written to comply with the Fire Safety Standard agreed with the IOMFRS; the purpose being to identify the key measures needed to safeguard the safety of employees, guests and other persons who may be affected in case of fire.

This will involve an in depth look at your premises and the people likely to use them (including disabled people), in order to consider the risk of a fire happening and to identify the measures which should need to be in place to prevent it and to ensure safety of guests and customers.

The Fire Risk Assessment should be undertaken by the owner or employer in most cases, or someone appointed by such person/s to carry out the task who is considered 'competent'. A person is considered 'competent' "where they have sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to enable them properly to implement the measures".

The Fire Safety Standard

The Fire Safety Standard has been agreed with the Isle of Man Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that tourist accommodation on the Island meets an acceptable standard and to ensure that the responsible person for the tourist accommodation not only understands the standard expected but also helps to set that standard. The fire safety department can be contacted on 647303 for further advice and guidance on your fire risk assessment, but it is now the duty of the 'Responsible Person' to ensure a Fire Risk Assessment is carried out and that the risks to persons from fires are reduced as much as possible. This is not as difficult as you might think and by simply applying a degree of 'common sense' and sound management methods (much of which is probably already being done) you will satisfy the law.

To assist you the accompanying template has been produced. It will help you follow the recognised steps in conducting a Fire Risk Assessment and showing compliance with the legislation.

Every property is different in terms of build, layout, interior décor and number and location of guests - so there is no magic formula, but this simple and easy to follow form and guide will provide you with a starting point and give prompts of aspects for you to consider.

This Fire Risk Assessment form is for guidance only. Visit Isle of Man does not warrant that its completion will fulfil all your statutory obligations and shall not be liable for any costs, claims, loss, injury, damages or proceedings howsoever arising from its use.

Step 1 - Identify Fire Hazards and Fire Risks.

Before a fire can occur, there needs to be three key components present:

- Heat - i.e. an ignition source e.g. flame from a match or spark from defective wiring
- Fuel - i.e. something that can burn e.g. wooden furniture, paper etc.
- Oxygen - i.e. the air that is all around us

It is useful to keep this rule that is sometimes called the 'triangle of combustion', always in mind when carrying out a fire risk assessment.

Of course, there will always be various forms of fuels, heat and oxygen present somewhere in a building/unit; however, in certain circumstances, particular combinations will present a greater fire hazard. We can spot fire hazards, in most buildings, if we systematically list both the sources of ignition and fuel that are there and then simply apply our own good judgement in deciding whether or not there is a real risk of an unwanted fire.

1.1 Sources of ignition

What are the sources of ignition in your building/unit? To assist you to identify what might cause a fire in your property, a number of common sources of ignition are listed below. If any of these items are not to be found in your property or you have taken a decision not to allow them, simply write 'None' in the relevant box.

a) Electrical - wiring and appliances

- i. Has electrical wiring been checked by a qualified contractor within the last 5 years?
- ii. Have trailing cables, overloaded sockets/adapters/extension leads, damage to cables, scorched cracked or loose sockets/switches been eliminated?
- iii. Are the fuse board/circuit breakers in good condition and correctly labelled?
- iv. Are all appliances in good condition with undamaged cables?
- v. Have electrical appliances been checked by a competent person within the last year?
- vi. Are all appliances labelled to show date of last test?

b) Cooking - especially deep-fat frying

- i. Are there instructions for the safe use of cooking equipment?
- ii. Is equipment (particularly where fitted with extraction hoods & vents) regularly cleaned and free from grease?
- iii. Are microwave cooling vents clear i.e. with no items stored on top of the microwave

c) Smoking

- i. Is there a strict 'no smoking' policy or is smoking allowed in some bedrooms in serviced accommodation or in bedrooms / and or public areas of self-catering units?
- ii. Are sufficient ashtrays available and are they regularly emptied into a safe i.e. metal?
- iii. If smoking is permitted, are metal (not plastic) waste bins used?

d) Candles

- i. Are candlesticks or tealights provided?
- ii. If providing candles do they have appropriate candleholders?

e) Heaters and boilers

- i. What sort of heating is there in the property?
- ii. Are all heaters in good condition?
- iii. Can any freestanding heaters easily be moved too close to any furnishings or other combustible items?
- iv. Is the boiler regularly serviced by a qualified person (e.g. Corgi registered engineer)?
- v. LPG (Liquefied petroleum gas) mobile heaters should not be used as these are prohibited in buildings with a fire certificate.

f) Open fires

- i. Is a fireguard provided?
- ii. Is the chimney regularly swept?
- iii. Is the hearth adequate to prevent rugs etc touching hot surfaces?
- iv. Are dry wood, kindling & firelighters provided?
- v. Are metal ashbins provided?

g) Others

- i. Are there any other sources of ignition in your property?

1.2 Fuel Present

What fuels are present and where are they? Identify what there is to burn in your property

h) Elements of structure

- i. Are the floors made of timber - or are they non-combustible?
- ii. Are the walls of brick or stone - or are they combustible?
- iii. Is there any wall or ceiling lining material, other than wallpapers that might burn (e.g. polystyrene ceiling tiles, wood effect or wooden cladding)?

i) Furniture and furnishings

- i. Does it comply with the Furniture and Furnishing (Fire Safety) Regulations?
- ii. Is there anything that could be deemed to be unusual and/or give rise to an increased fire risk (e.g. quantity, ease of ignition etc)?

j) Domestic Waste

- i. Is it removed from the property daily?
- ii. Is it kept away from sources of ignition?

k) Other items - e.g. petrol for lawnmowers, cleaning materials etc

- i. Are any highly flammable liquids or substances kept on the premises?
- ii. Are they stored safely, preferably outside, in a metal bin or store?

1.3. Activities that might cause a fire, including work processes/procedures etc.

With the combinations of fuels and ignition sources, is there a risk of an unwanted fire and are there any particular activities that could give rise to an increased risk of fire?

The most common activities that might cause a fire will be: cooking (including barbeques), general maintenance, cleaning, children and pets playing - especially children with matches etc.

While some of these issues will have already been considered above, it is worth spending a few moments to think about your particular circumstances and what else might create a risk of fire in your property; moreover, what you could do to either remove or reduce these risks.

For example, many owners of heritage buildings prohibit contractors using tools such as blowlamps on their premises.

Step 2 - Identify Persons at Risk.

The next step in the fire risk assessment process is to consider the people who might be at risk from a fire in your premises and record this information.

2.1 Number of guests

Consider both the numbers and types of guests you would expect to accommodate.

- i. How many persons is the property considered suitable for?
- ii. Do you anticipate that children will stay in the property and, if so how many and where will they be located?
- iii. Do you anticipate accommodating persons who require assistance to escape the property (e.g. disabled persons)?

Please note: Regardless of number of guests you will be required to undertake some fire safety work such as fitting smoke detection. You may accommodate up to six paying guests, provided that they are not in rooms above the first floor or below ground level without the need for a fire certificate. If you have more than 6 paying guests or any guests are sleeping below the ground floor or above the first floor then you will potentially require a Fire Certificate under the Fire Precautions Act 1975 as you would be deemed to be operating as a hotel or boarding house (six would include staff if they are not family and are employed and sleep on the premises, i.e. live in staff).

2.2. Number of staff/employees

- i. Are there any employees under 18?

Step 3 - Evaluate the Risks.

With all the aforementioned aspects considered, the levels of risk can be established and simple 'common sense' measures taken to reduce them. However, the law still expects you to plan for an 'unwanted fire' and ensure that persons are warned of such an event and then able to escape.

It is this aspect of the fire risk assessment process that probably causes most 'responsible persons' the greatest degree of difficulty as structural design guidance can be complicated. However, it should be remembered that for most small buildings the fire precautions should be fairly basic; certainly if the building was built to modern building standards much of this would have been dealt with by your building inspector.

3.1. Means of escape

a) Detail the type of property (please refer to the conditions which would require a fire certificate in section 2.1):

- i. Single-storey bungalow or apartment?
- ii. Two-storey house?
- iii. Three-storey house or property with loft conversion?
- iv. Other (please describe)?

b) Detail the number of exit doors and where they are:

- i. Are any inward opening?
- ii. Are they always easy to open?
- iii. Are they always kept clear and available for use?

3.2. The fire alarm and fire detection

c) Describe what fire alarm and fire detectors have been provided:

- i. How will deaf or other people who have difficulty either hearing or responding to a fire alarm be catered for?

- ii. How is your fire alarm maintained?

3.3. Firefighting equipment

d) Detail what fire extinguishers/blankets are provided and where they are.

- i. Is a fire blanket provided in the kitchen?
- ii. Have any fire extinguishers been serviced in the last year?

3.4. Escape lighting

e) Detail areas covered by emergency lighting (if any):

- i. For small premises it might be acceptable to simply provide a torch, which should be mounted on the wall and easily accessible.

3.5. Evacuation procedure

f) Describe the evacuation procedures

For convenience, attach to this fire risk assessment document a copy your standard 'fire procedure' guidance for staff and/or guests i.e. 'what to do in case of fire' notice.

Additional Notes

Your risk assessment document is not set in 'tablets of stone' it should evolve - you must continually review and update it as things change in your business. You will also need to use it to form an action plan for any work it may have highlighted as necessary to reduce the risk. Date everything - all documents and when the actions in the action plan have been completed. Make time to train any staff - even if you only have a cleaner. They must be trained on the part they have to play in ensuring that the risks are minimised. Also ensure guests are made aware of the means of escape either by showing them or by providing plans/detailed instructions in the bedrooms.

Remember that over time risks may change if you carry out renovations or alterations or change something else in your business - so re-evaluate your risk assessment frequently.

Finally keep your risk assessment safe and keep a copy off site if possible in case something does happen - you will need to prove to your insurance company and fire officer that you have carried this out.